12 Days of Murdermas

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12 Days of Murdermas

by TheSilverQueen

Summary

A collection of my 12 Days of Murdermas ficlets for #SeasonsSlick 2019, the prompt calendar is HERE. Summary will change to reflect the most current day, and warnings will be chapter-specific at the beginning of each.

Prompts Covered = Surprise Heat/Rut | Accidental Bonding | Mpreg | Beta Pairings | Mistletoe | True Mates | Role Reversal | Sex Toys | Surprise Guests | Snow | Creature Fic | New Year

Index of Ficlets (with individual summaries & tags) = Click to Chapter 13 or click here

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Surprise Heat/Rut - Alpha!Will & Omega!Hannibal

Chapter Summary

When fireman Will rescues an unconscious Hannibal after a house fire, the last thing he expects is for Hannibal to immediately descend into heat, declare his scent divine, and then demand him as a heat partner.

Chapter Notes

Warnings: a house burns down (but no one dies) and also completely inaccurate medical blabbering about smoke inhalation

Inspired by: this tweet about crystal balls burning down houses

Dynamics: Alpha!Will & Omega!Hannibal

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It's a very hot day, so Will isn't at all surprised when he hears the bell go off. They're in the middle of a drought and fireworks season, so put the two together and you get a *lot* of fires. He's probably attended more fires this past month than he has in the entire season before that.

What he is surprised at, however, is the location of the fire.

"Chandler Square?" Beverly echoes, staring down at the radio like it has all the answers to the universe in it. "Since when do rich people let their vacation houses burn down?"

"Maybe he had guests over."

"In Chandler Square? Will, you don't have sleepover guests there. You hold lavish seventy course dinner parties and debutante balls and then everyone goes home to their own mansion."

"We don't know it's a mansion," Will says patiently, clicking his seatbelt in. "You ready, partner?"

"Let's go and drown a rich guy's mansion."

"Bev, seriously."

Beverly is a terrible person, so when they arrive at the actual mansion of a house, sirens blazing, she cackles at Will as she leaps down. However, Beverly is also an awesome partner, so no words are needed as they ready the hose and start doing their best to put out the raging inferno. It's quite a massive one, actually, so either the guy has an enormous library of really flammable books or an enormous kitchen of really flammable equipment. Fortunately, back-up arrives pretty soon afterwards, so they at least keep the blaze from consuming too much of the guy's lawn.

When the flames die down enough for them to start getting close to the house, Will and Beverly focus on extinguishing the last few hot spots as another crew works on entering the house and clearing it.

Will squints as they approach the house. "Is that a bush in the shape of a deer?"

"Hey, it could've been a naked cupid."

"Isn't that a little too pedestrian for a guy whose lawn is bigger than my house?"

"Have you seen some of the European fountains?" Beverly demands, grunting as she heaves the hose over yet another weirdly pruned bush. "They're all naked people."

"Never left the country, remember?"

"You've never taken an art class?"

Will shoots her an exasperated look. They've only been partners for a few months, but Beverly was definitely there for the day they all clustered into the back room to wrap secret gifts for the chief and his wife on their anniversary. "You've seen the way I wrap gifts and do handmade cards. What on earth makes you think I took an art class?"

"Truuuue," Beverly concedes. "I think Bella told Jack it was sweet to get some gifts from his men's kids."

"Wow, thanks for that."

"Maybe we should sign you up for one. I hear the local Art with Alphas has an opening."

Will is more than aware that the local Art with Alphas has an opening. They've already sent him three e-mails, two postcards, and a gift basket of lube. It's understandable in that the ratio of alphas to omegas is heavily skewed in the favor of omegas, so any typical single alpha is usually pretty pleased to be the center of attention at an art class where all the omegas get to take turns drawing them, presenting their piece, and then making their pitch that they're the perfect partner. Will, however, is not a typical single alpha and has no intention of being stuck in a single creepy pose while omegas leer at him and then drone on and on about how they went to finishing school or mastered every cooking instrument.

"I dodged the fireman calendar for a reason," is all Will says.

Beverly bursts out laughing and nearly sprays them both with the hose. "With that butt? You've got nothing to be ashamed of. Besides, I know for a fact they do clothed sessions in

addition to the standard nude ones."

"I don't want to be ogled by anyone. Naked or clothed. I, uh, also don't want to know why you know that they do clothed and naked sessions."

"Betas have eyes too," Beverly says airily. "As long as you're willing to cough up the dough, you can stare at all the buns you want, no matter your designation. My mom, bless her, got me a reservation to a clothed session, but the alpha decided mid-session to do a striptease and hot damn was she fine."

"Who's doing a striptease? Is it Graham?"

Will groans and turns to face Price and Zeller. They're both got matching grins on their faces and soot on their clothes. He won't deny that they're the best search and rescue team on the force due to their enhanced hearing, but sometimes it's really inconvenient.

Like the time they overheard Will trying to delete a voicemail from a dance recruitment company.

"I knew I should've deleted that voicemail without listening to it."

Zeller snickers. "But then we wouldn't have ever known about your glorious origin story in ballet and Irish step dance!"

"Oh no, what a travesty," Will deadpans. Out of the corner of his eye, he sees the way Beverly's eyes light up and decides to swiftly change the subject, because Beverly knowing that he used to dance probably won't help his case of trying to dodge her attempts to make him pose naked. "So is the house clear?"

"Yeah, empty as a bathroom after Chilton makes his morning trip," Price confirms. "Took us forever to search all the rooms though."

Looking at the mansion, Will believes it. "I guess we're good to try and track down the owner, then."

As they head back down the lawn towards the trucks and the growing crowd of gawkers, Zeller says, "Dispatch said it was some of rich psychiatrist."

"Dibs on *not* making that report," Will says instantly.

"Secret history with shrinks?" Beverly asks, one eyebrow raised. Will usually tries to wriggle out of notifications and reports, but she usually is good at knowing when Will is really uncomfortable and when it's just habit.

"Every skinny dancer has a history of shrinks."

It's not the full truth, of course – Will saw shrinks for a lot more reasons than his dancing – but Will isn't about to go there, and honestly, the dancing is more than enough ammunition for Beverly to be cackling until Christmas. He'll probably get a tutu for the Christmas Secret Santa at the rate this is going.

When Beverly snickers and crosses in front of him, the breeze of her movement is accompanied by the sweetest perfume Will's ever smelt – syrupy sweet strawberries, freshly cut pine tree sap, warm clothes straight out of the dryer.

"Bev, is that a new perfume?"

She gives him an odd look. "Uh, no. Why?"

Will inhales again, widening his stance and letting his chest balloon open to intake as much as he can. He smells the faint traces of Beverly's clean shampoo, Price's aftershave, Zeller's shaving cream, rust and dust and smoke, but he also smells that perfume, rich despite being fainter than anything else, and emanating from the house. A third inhale, and he realizes the perfume is actually diluted by the smoke and dust from the house. Which means the scent is coming from the house. Which means either that the dude in the house owned a lot of perfume or –

"Hey, are we sure the house is clear?"

Price and Zeller give him twin weird looks to match Beverly's. "Yeah," Zeller says cautiously. "We didn't hear a peep. Why?"

"Because I smell an omega."

"There is a crowd of bloodthirsty reporters and gossiping neighbors gathering. . ."

"It's coming from the house."

Beverly asks, "Are you sure?" But her tone is more concerned than confused; they all know that Will's alpha-heightened sense is smell, just like Price and Zeller's is hearing. On a good day Will can pick out someone's last meal from across the room, and fireman training has only sharpened that skill.

Will turns around. "I'm going in," he decides, and then he takes off, ignoring his coworkers' shouts.

Thankfully, the door has already been kicked down, so the only trouble Will has is carefully stepping over remnants of melted furnishings or crumbled artwork. Apparently the rich guy has a lot of artwork because there's a bunch of frames, although they're blackened by soot and fire. And when Will strains his ears, he hears nothing – no heartbeats, no breathing, no frantic yells for help.

But he certainly smells someone. And although perfumers have tried for centuries, no one's even been able to effectively replicate the perfume of omega or alpha pheromones.

After wandering around the ground level a few times, Will realizes that the scent is coming from the pantry. The door's been forced in, of course, but the room is small enough that Will can see why Price or Zeller probably just stuck their head in, looked around, and cleared it. But his nose has never led him wrong before, so Will inhales again for confirmation and then walks in. The floor groans strangely under his feet as he does, so Will taps his foot a few

more times and then starts kicking in the secret panel that the rich guy has. Sure enough, in a few seconds he's got himself a full on secret staircase.

"Rich people," Will groans, and then he starts climbing down.

The perfume gets stronger and stronger as he walks, thicker and wilder, like going from a room with the window open to the wild moors straight out into the wilds themselves. There's a hint of panic, too, that natural primal response to being trapped with no way out, and it makes Will hasten his footsteps, because unless this is some kind of apocalypse bunker, the rich guy probably doesn't have oxygen gear or anything to protect himself from a fire.

Rich guy, it turns out, is collapsed at the foot of the stairs. He has wet cloth draped over his face and hands, so he wasn't an idiot, but a quick glance around the secret basement tells Will there was no window or other ventilation to the outside, so he had no choice but to inhale the smoke that came down.

And he's definitely an omega.

"Hey!" Will shouts, because it's not a good sign that the rich guy hasn't moved or recoiled from a strange alpha intruding on what is clearly his territory. "Hello!"

When a few more shouts and a couple nudges bring no signs of stirring, Will sighs and kneels down. He's grateful now for his thick protective gear, because omegas who awaken as they're being transported by strangers to strange places can attack and attack *fiercely*. Will's seen the results when a fearful omega wakes up and tears out an attacker or kidnapper's throat.

On the other hand, he has no other way of getting rich guy out.

It takes a couple of heaves to get rich guy properly balanced into his arms. He's definitely alive, Will can hear the rasps of his breathing, but he's also bulky and tall and basically dead weight. It's a struggle to maneuver him up the stairs without banging rich guy's head on something or slipping on the stairs.

Fortunately, rich guy starts stirring once they ascend to the pantry and start towards the outside. It's probably the breeze of fresh air that makes him start to come back to himself, and Will hears the faintest thrum of a snarl building.

"Hey, don't snarl at me, buddy," Will pants. "You're heavy and unconscious and not helping in this endeavor. I just need to get you to an ambulance for assessment."

The snarl rises in volume.

"Just don't rip out my throat, okay? I'm rather attached to it."

Just as abruptly as it built, the snarl ends. A faint questioning purr arises, either because rich guy is now starting to remember the fire or because he realizes that Will hasn't tried to subdue him at all. Most alphas who run off with omegas tend to muzzle them so they can't bite and are reduced to other means of defense.

Beverly catches sight of them as they enter the main hallway and yells for a stretcher. This works out great, because it means Will can lay rich guy down carefully on the stretcher to give his straining arms a rest instead of having to awkwardly shuffle his weight to Beverly.

“Damn, Graham,” Beverly whistles lowly as the EMTs swarm the stretcher. “I mean, I knew your nose was awesome, but damn is your nose awesome.”

“Alpha noses were built to sniff out omegas,” Will reminds her.

Beverly sniffs the air. Betas can get heightened senses too, but it’s far rarer and more of a genetic flip of the coin than the sure thing it is for alphas. Beverly, to Will’s knowledge, has no heightened senses, but it’s not exactly something you ask over a casual conversation.

“Oh wow. Yeah I can smell that. I’m surprised I missed it.”

On the stretcher, rich guy suddenly sits up, pushing away the oxygen and growling something at the EMTs. When Will inhales again, the scent is much, much stronger, a siren call instead of faint identifier, and the low coiling in his gut tells Will that they’re about to have a much bigger issue than smoke inhalation and gossiping neighbors.

Will sighs. When the EMTs gesture him over, he obligingly jogs towards them.

“He’s refusing treatment and demanding to speak to you,” they tell Will, as though he can’t see the way rich guy has laser focused on him the second he came into line of sight.

Will decides to take the blunt approach. Reason is usually the first thing that recedes, so there’s no sense in beating around the bush. “Hi,” Will says. “I’m Will Graham, I saved your life, and you’re going into heat.”

Rich guy blinks. His teeth are impressively sharp around the snarl he was inflicting at the EMTs. Somehow he still manages to display them even as he replies to Will. “I am fully aware of that,” he snaps, sounding miffed. “I am still in control of my faculties.”

“Then you know you need treatment. They said you were a doctor?”

Rich guy waves it aside. “I wasn’t exposed for very long. And heat is a far more pressing concern than smoke inhalation.”

“Because respiratory failure is nothing to worry about.”

Rich guy bears his teeth. “Now that my heat has started in full, it cannot be stopped with suppressants. I must ride it out. And you are an alpha – you know that an omega who’s heat is not properly tended to will likely experience systemic multiple organ failure. So compared to that, yes, I would say respiratory failure is the lesser of two evils.”

Will inclines his head in silence. It’s an ugly truth, but a truth nonetheless. Without a safe place to nest, pheromones to soothe his inflamed mind, and at least one knot, fake or real, the heat will continue building until his heart and lungs and brain turn into soup.

“Do you typically make arrangements somewhere? We can bring you to whatever heat sanctuary you normally go to.”

“No,” rich guy says curtly. “They smell too much of disinfectant. And previous couplings.”

“I’m pretty sure it’s standard policy to trash everything and start anew. Unless the room is rented in perpetuity.”

“I have a very good nose.”

Will resists the urge to throw up his hands. On one hand, if he does have a good nose, then yeah, a heat sanctuary probably does reek of past couplings, and if an omega does not feel absolutely safe then the heat is going to be painful not only to him but everyone around him who smells his unease and fear. On the other hand, heat sanctuaries were built to accommodate omegas in heat, and they pretty much have the whole market cornered; there aren’t many other places that have the supplies to do it safely.

“You wanna ride this out in a hospital?”

“I was a doctor,” rich guy says, and his tone says wonders about what he isn’t saying.

“Right. You still gotta ride out the heat *somewhere*.”

“I would like to return to your station.”

Will side eyes him hard for that one. Most omegas prefer a space *away* from alphas, not one bursting to the brim with them. They do have a room, of course – every public building does, because sometimes there’s no other choice – but the one in Will’s station hasn’t been used as long as he’s been on the force. “You do know that there are a lot of alphas on the force, right?”

“There will be you. That’s enough.”

Will blinks. “Um . . . I’m not exactly certified as a heat companion.”

“You’ve taken the classes. They always teach the same phrases, and you’re putting out the recommended pheromones. You’re also standing exactly three to five feet from me, as recommended.” Rich guy closes his eyes and inhales, and when he opens them, his eyes are the bright gold of an omega in heat. “And your scent . . . You smell divine.”

“Still not a heat companion.”

“Consent is what matters. I’m still lucid enough to choose my alpha and give consent. You and I have a bond, we find each other’s scent appealing, you have a knot and I need it. What other qualifications must I aspire to?”

Will wants to argue, because a bond is sacred and usually formed with purpose and a ceremony and premeditation, not a fifteen minute walk out of a basement. But he can’t deny that part of him is definitely leaning closer to rich guy, and bonds can be formed in high pressure situations, when an omega and alpha are in close quarters during or after something

traumatic or earth-shattering and end up bound together. It's not as permanent or powerful as one formed with purpose, but it can definitely end there; many alpha and omega couples formed in the wake of major disasters go on to marry and live together forever.

And Will has taken the classes. He never went for certification, because he didn't need more invitations accompanied with lube gift baskets, but all of the classes boil down to "give the omega what they want and need and don't die" so they're not exactly hard to digest.

Will takes a deep breath. He can already feel the faint itching of his iris threatening to expand into alpha-red. "Are you sure? You know that once an omega starts a heat with a particular alpha, there's no turning back."

"Will Graham, if you do not start kissing me soon, I will start ripping your clothes off. With my teeth."

". . . Good enough," Will decides, and turns his head to find the EMTs and make arrangements before rich guy makes good on his threat.

Rich guy lasts exactly one second until after the thick door of the heat room is closed before he descends upon Will. Buttons go flying, cloth goes to shreds, and Will is kissed more thoroughly that he's ever experienced in his life. He barely manages to stop them from falling over and instead they slam into a wall as rich guy does his best to get Will as naked as the day he was born.

When he gets a respite as rich guy starts investigating Will's abs with his tongue, Will shudders and tries to get his mind together. "You, uh, you gonna tell me your name?"

"Does it matter?"

"I'd like to know it?"

Rich guy pauses with his pants halfway down his legs and cocks his head. His eyes are completely gold now, mind lost to the madness of heat, and Will is absurdly grateful that there is no video surveillance in the heat room, only a panic button.

"You do need to know my name to scream it," rich guy concludes thoughtfully. "My name is Hannibal."

And then he's onto Will, savaging his mouth and bruising his arms and pushing him to the ground so he clamber on top and seat himself to his liking, and Will is screaming *Hannibal, Hannibal, HANNIBAL*.

Most heats last about two to three days. Just long enough to get pregnant and/or really sore, not long enough to deplete a person enough that they'd die if they didn't have ready access to food and water. Surprise heats can last a little bit longer, nature driving the alpha and omega to bond tightly to increase their chances of survival and gene perpetuation, but not too much longer.

Hannibal's heat lasts seven days, and Will only is aware of that because heat rooms are stocked with enough supplies for six and he has to tear into the emergency rations stored in the secret compartment.

When it's over, Will is dazed and sore and bruised from head to feet. Hannibal was just as enthusiastic on day one as he was on day seven, and Will knows he's beyond lucky Hannibal didn't bite him deep enough to form a permanent bond, because he forget to pack a bite guard and honestly Hannibal might've just bitten right through it in his wilder moments.

Thank god for gauze and the fact that alphas tend to heal a bit faster than other designations.

Hannibal wakes up as Will is trying to tape gauze over a bit on his side, and Will definitely does not screech like a dinosaur and jump five feet when ten more fingers are suddenly on his back.

"Let me help," Hannibal says quietly. "I was, after all, responsible."

Will concedes easily enough. Letting Hannibal bandage a bite seems rather easy after he's let Hannibal devour every single part of him during sex. "And you're proud of it," Will notes, because he can hear the faintest thrum of a purr echoing in Hannibal's chest.

"Would you blame me? I was in need, and fortune smiled upon me with an excellent specimen to sate my lust."

"Wow, way to make me sound like a petri dish sample."

"You are far more beautiful than a petri dish, my dear. No sketches will be able to contain your magnificence, although I shall have to do my best. I don't suppose you'd object to posing for me?"

"When you say pose – "

Hannibal cuts him off with a firm kiss. "All of you. You were magnificent, Will."

On the bright side, at least Will knows there's a chance that there will be more drawings of his body than his genitalia. On the down side: "There's a reason I don't apply for Art with Alphas."

"I am not part of that . . . contest," Hannibal says with a faint moue of disgust. "This would be a private showing."

Will raises an eyebrow. "Just like that? We hardly know each other."

"I know everything I need to know. Don't you?"

Will supposes that's true. Hannibal was in danger from fire, both literal and metaphorical, and Will saved him. Will protected him, Will gave him shelter, and Will plied him with food and drink to keep him going. Will has done everything an omega would ask of an alpha, in the old days.

Of course, these aren't the old days.

"You know my name and nothing else."

Hannibal shrugs. "That is easily remedied. I am not proposing marriage, Will. Simply to a closer relationship."

" . . . Which leads to marriage."

"When someone finds their perfect partner, isn't it recommended to ensure that such a partner is claimed?"

A warmth alights in Will's chest. All of his life, he's been shunned as strange, for his empathy, for his nose, for his disinterest in bonding. And here Hannibal is – by all accounts a very desirable omega with his life put together and a good career and a massive fortune – wanting *him* to the exclusion of all others, and practically proposing marriage a week into knowing him. It's heady stuff for an alpha.

"If you want to know more information about me," Hannibal says, "you need only ask. But I am content. I know everything I need to know about you, and you are everything I want."

Will turns around. Hannibal is beautiful, with his hair ruffled and eyes still a faint gold and chest marked with bites when Will returned the favor. Will sort of wants to kiss him and make love again, but for the fact that they both probably need sleep and a long bath. And also the burning question Will kind of needs to ask.

"I just have one question."

"Go ahead."

"What's with the secret basement? I know it's not a nest, because it has no provisions for heat, and either the floor plan of your house is really messed up and you need to murder your architect . . . or you've got a much bigger secret part of your basement."

Hannibal's got a great poker face, but the way his scent thickens is a dead giveaway.

Will leans in close, feeling the way Hannibal trembles at Will's breath on his shoulder and reveling in it. "What naughty secrets are you hiding in that secret basement of yours, Doctor Lecter?" Will whispers.

"Wouldn't you love to find out?"

And god help him, Will does. There's a darkness inside of Hannibal – Will can practically *taste* it – and he decided to shift his life track into being a fireman instead of a police officer because finding darkness and locking it up got boring. Far more interesting, Will came to realize, to let it burn its brightest and then see the aftermath.

"Does it have anything to do with your house catching fire?"

"No. That was my crystal ball. It's an heirloom and I must have forgotten to cover it."

Will blinks, thoroughly derailed. “You have an heirloom crystal ball?”

“The saying in my family was that it would lead each Lecter to their perfect partner,” Hannibal says solemnly. “My father dropped it and my mother returned it. My grandmother knocked it off its stand and tripped my grandfather as he passed in the hallway. And now it has led me to you.”

“ . . . Maybe we should find a case for that.”

“An excellent idea.” Hannibal tilts his head. “How long before we are released from this room?”

“Oh, I’ve just got to hit the call button.”

“So there isn’t a set schedule where they check on us?”

“Life sign monitoring is pretty standard, so as long as our hearts don’t go into cardiac arrest and we’re still breathing, we’ll be left alone until we eat through the emergency rations. Why?”

Hannibal tackles him almost as soon as the sentence as done, which neatly answers that question.

When they finally emerge on day eight, Beverly waits just long enough for Hannibal to gracefully glide to the showers before she squeals, loud enough to bring the entire goddamn fire station down, “CAN I PLAN YOUR WEDDING?!”

“No.”

“But Will – ”

“No.”

“Will please – ”

Hannibal sticks his head back around the corner at that exact moment. “Will, are you coming? Also, please inform your friend the answer is yes. I will need all the help I can get.”

“You two becoming friends is going to be the bane of my existence,” Will sighs.

FINIS

Chapter End Notes

A/N: And then Hannibal and Will get married, and Hannibal rebuilds his house while Will makes a nice sturdy wooden box for the crystal ball, and they live happily ever

after as murder husbands. And Hannibal does a lot of sketches of Will posing naked for him.

Hint for Day 2: It involves that trope where partners/mates can't physically separate. Stay tuned for the reveal tomorrow!

Accidental Bonding - Alpha!Will & Omega!Hannibal

Chapter Summary

> When Will agrees to fill in last minute for a shoot with Hannibal Lecter, the newest rising omega star in the acting world, he never expects to end up accidentally bonded to the guy.

Chapter Notes

> Warnings: inaccurate medical & movie making jargon, description of vomiting, and some talk about the prejudice about omegas choosing between careers and families
>
> Inspired by: Did you know that Keanu Reeves and Winona Ryder got accidentally married in Dracula? Now you do. Also if you're a fellow Teen Wolf fan, there's an amazing Stiles/Derek fic called To Have and to Hold by KouriArashi which also inspired this.
>
> Dynamics: Alpha!Will & Omega!Hannibal

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Will looks up to see Jack Crawford plowing through the snow towards him, megaphone in one hand and clipboard in the other, his face red from anger, Will knows he's going to be in for a world of trouble. He sighs and gives Winston, their newest dog actor, a pat before he stands up to face whatever yelling Jack is about to bestow.

"Graham!" Jack barks. "You, with me, now!"

This isn't exactly uncommon, so Will follows without question. It's more common to see Jack barking at people and running around than it is to see him sitting or standing still.

"Good morning to you too, Jack," Will says dryly.

"Chilton flounced off the set this morning," Jack fumes. "Claimed the snow was too much for his delicate skin."

Will raises an eyebrow. "Well, you did know he was a drama queen. What about Froideveux?"

"Took one look at the set and burst into tears."

“Budge?”

“Apparently he’s engaged with an opera showing or something.”

Will whistles lowly. Jack had engaged all three alphas, just in case one of them couldn’t make it, and thankfully the format of the movie – a holiday special about six different couples of different designations finding love during the Christmas season – would have allowed for easy substitution. For all three of them to be unavailable is rather spectacular, but also rather bad, since tomorrow’s shoot is about an omega couple and therefore no alphas were contracted.

“So what now?” Will asks curiously. Sometimes Jack just needs a sounding board, and Will’s found that by asking prompting questions, Jack can figure out what he wants rather quickly.

Jack harrumphs. “Well I can’t wait until the day after tomorrow, because it’s the beta and omega couple shoot, and the alpha agency won’t be able to get anyone out here by the end of day. Storm’s too bad, they said.”

Well, Will can’t argue with that. There’s a reason he only loaded up the dogs with thick fur coats for today’s shoot. And a reason why he’s wearing five layers of clothing.

“So are we gonna cancel?”

“Are you joking?” Jack demands, sounding scandalized. “We scored *Hannibal Lecter* for this shoot and today’s his only available day! We are going forward no matter what.”

Will hums. On one hand, it makes sense; Hannibal Lecter is the rising star in the world of acting, famous for his realistic performances and ability to emote, and even more famous for having been a doctor first and picking up acting as a side career that took off like a hurricane. On the other hand, the majority of rest of the cast and crew are betas, and Jack has been fanatical about his insistence on portraying a real relationship with real alphas, betas, and omegas to promote equal acting opportunities. So if the alpha agency truly can’t anyone out . . .

Which is when Will notices the little side glances that Jack is giving him. “What?”

“*You’re* an alpha,” Jack says, in a voice like a man receiving revelation from an angel on high.

“And?”

It’s not like Will has tried to hide it. Omega and beta rights movements have come and gone, but alphas still have an edge in doing whatever they want. It helps cut down the automatic derision Will gets for choosing to devote his life to being a dog actor manager when people get a whiff off him and realize he’s an alpha, born and bred to overpower rivals and challengers.

“I need an alpha for today. And you’re an alpha.”

Will comes to an abrupt halt. “You cannot be serious.”

“Why not? I just need a stand in so the visual effects team gets a good idea of what is happening, and so Lecter has someone to play his lines off of. We can replace you in post.”

“I do not act. I’ve never even taken an acting class.”

“Then we can give you cue cards,” Jack says impatiently. “Get over to hair and make-up, because day light is fading and so is the time we have booked for Lecter. I can add a bonus to your paycheck if that’s what you need, but right now what *I* need is for you to be on set in three minutes.”

And then Jack is gone, like he hasn’t just pushed Will into a role meant for Frederick Chilton, the breakout alpha star of the year.

Still. Will does need today’s paycheck.

So he sighs and trudges off to hair and make-up, who twitter and tsk over his clothing. He gets spritzed with cologne, drowned with hairspray, and shoved into a penguin suit before he’s dragged onto set by one of Jack’s many assistants. Miriam has a sympathetic look on her face, but she still shoves a bunch of cue cards in his hand before pointing at his marker and then darting away.

Will looks around him – at the spectacular view, at the still swirling snow, at the lights and flowers and cast and crew – and muses, “What have you gotten yourself into, Graham?”

“You are not Frederick Chilton,” a voice says suddenly from behind him. “Unless my dear Frederick has undergone some significant surgery.”

Will spins around to find an omega standing behind him, hands casually tucked into his pockets and an amused smile on his face. He’s tall for an omega, with hair gelled to perfection and shoes cleaned to a shine and the strangest plaid suit Will’s ever seen. He also has an accent, which means he can only be one person.

“Er, yeah, Chilton was, uh, indisposed,” Will stammers.

Lecter laughs softly. “That’s one way of putting it. And you are?”

“The dog guy,” Will says stupidly. “I mean – well, I mean, I am also the dog guy – not also, I’m not an actor – *anyways*, basically Jack just wants you to have someone to read lines with and then they can edit me out in post.”

Lecter looks him up and down. It feels strangely like a scientist looking down at a bug pinned on a slide, but it’s cold and clinical, not like an omega judging an alpha for their choice of career or, worse, an omega assessing an alpha like a piece of meat. Then again, Lecter has an impressive poker face, so maybe he is thinking uncharitable thoughts but is able to keep them off his face and, well, act.

“I look forward to working with you,” Lecter says warmly.

“Uh, you too.”

Thankfully, before Will can make any more of an idiot of himself, Jack storms onto set with the priest in tow and Miriam faithfully on his heels.

“LET’S GET THIS SHOW GOING!” Jack bellows. “Quit standing around and gossiping! Daylight is fading, people! Graham, Lecter, PLACES!”

While Will scrambles to make sure he’s standing on his marker, which is half buried by the snow, Lecter gracefully shrugs off his jacket to a waiting assistant and strides forward to his own marker, inclining his head respectfully to the priest who says something in a strange language and bows back.

“And . . . 3, 2, 1, ACTION!”

The priest opens his mouth, and a spew of sounds comes out. None of which Will recognizes.

“Is that part of the ceremony?” Will whispers.

Lecter’s mouth twitches. “We are supposed to be caught up in the magic of the moment,” he says, sounding like he’s only just restraining himself from smirking. “And love is, of course, constant across languages.”

Will looks down at his cue cards. Of course, everyone’s lines are in English. “How am I supposed to know when to say what if I don’t know what the priest is saying?”

“By following the cues, my dear.”

The priest raises his hands, palms up, and says another burst of something.

Lecter steps up smoothly, lifting one hand to place it in the priest’s. When the priest gives Will the stink eye and subtly shakes his other hand, Will clears his throat awkwardly and steps forward to place his hand in the priest’s as well.

“This isn’t what was planned,” Will hisses.

“We wanted an authentic ceremony,” Lecter replies patiently. “This is part of the authentic ceremony.”

The priest chants something three times, and then he brings their hands together, palms together and each finger matched. While Will stares blankly at Lecter, the priest smiles wildly and produces a soft red ribbon before winding it around their wrists three times and tying it off with an elaborate bow and even more elaborate flourish.

Then the priest launches into another speech, still in whatever language he speaks, while Will tries to subtly angle his gaze down to look at his free hand and his cue cards.

While he’s squinting, Lecter says suddenly, “Your cologne – it smells like it came out of bottle with a ship on it. I much prefer your natural scent.”

“You can smell me under all of this?”

“Hmm. I’ve always had an exceptional nose. Did you enjoy your steak?”

Will blinks. There’s exceptional, and then there’s “I know what you had for dinner last night”. But then again, most omegas have heightened senses, in order to give them an edge over rutting alphas. It makes it easier for them to stay one step ahead so that they can choose the partner they judge is best for them, and their best shot at having healthy children and a fit mate.

“That’s a bit, uh, wow. It was okay?”

“It is bad luck to see your groom before your wedding,” Lecter says smoothly, as if they’re just now back to actually sticking on script. “Otherwise I would have eaten dinner with you. I assure you, I would have served a far finer meal.”

“You’re a chef and a doctor?”

“A hobby, but one I cultivate diligently. I am very particular about what goes into my body.”

The priest clears his throat, and Will guiltily snaps his eyes back over. The man at least seems more amused than annoyed – maybe he conducts a lot of marriage ceremonies for film, or maybe a lot of wedding couples are equally chatty – but either way he waits patiently for Lecter and Will to turn their attention back to him.

Some sort of signal passes between the priest and Lecter, because Lecter bows his head and says, quietly and firmly, “I do.”

The priest then looks at Will.

“Uh, I do?”

The priest smiles widely and throws up his arms in celebration, prompting a flood of light as the crew turn on all the spotlights. Will cringes instinctively, but fortunately the cameras turn to focus on dogs as Will’s pack is released to charge up the hill towards them, sending snow flying left and right. Jack had said something about this ceremony usually ending with dogs instead of doves, given that an omega’s pack usually has good judgment about the incoming alpha, so this isn’t unexpected.

Unfortunately, Will is used to being the guy crouched behind the scenes, coaxing the dogs to wherever they need to go, so on instinct he starts to kneel and call the pack to him.

He freezes when Lecter grunts in surprise as he’s yanked off balance.

“Oh my god, I’m so sorry,” he apologizes frantically. “I’m just, uh, I’m usually the guy the dogs run to?”

The dogs reach them at this point, and Winston in particular nearly bowls Will over with happy barks and a wagging tail, so Lecter merely kneels down next to him and look on fondly at the dogs crowding around them.

“I can see that. They like you.”

Will scratches under Buster's chin. "Yeah, they're my best friends."

"CUT!" Jack roars. "NOBODY MOVE UNTIL I CONFIRM WE GOT EVERYTHING!"

Will rolls his eyes. "Typical," he mutters, counting the dogs on instinct as they begin to calm down upon coming to the tragic realization that Will has no treats for them this time.

"You've worked with Mr. Crawford before?"

"This is only my second shoot, but yeah he's been pretty much the same the entire time."

Lecter hums. "People did say that working with him was . . . an interesting experience," he says thoughtfully.

"That's one way to put it."

"You are married," comes a whispery and thickly accented voice from behind them. Because apparently the priest does speak English and just really enjoyed Will's confused face for this entire ceremony. "Divorce now?"

"What a short marriage," Lecter remarks with a laugh. "I also feel we are going about this backwards." He holds out his other hand, the one not bound by the ribbon. "My name is Hannibal Lecter, and I'm an actor, a doctor, and a chef. And you are?"

Will tsks at a dog about to take Lecter's coat between his teeth, and then he shakes Lecter's hand. "Will Graham. Dog wrangler and serial stray adopter. Nice to meet you."

"WE'RE DONE FOR TODAY! EVERYBODY PACK IT UP! WE MEET BACK HERE IN TWO DAYS!"

Jack's army of assistants descend on them, throwing a coat at Will and helping Lecter into his own and unwinding the ribbon, and so Will waves a hasty goodbye and then starts whistling to gather up his pack. Lecter seems completely preoccupied with whatever Miriam is showing him, so Will doesn't even look back. The shoot is done, and Will and his dogs can get some sleep and move on to the next project.

And that, he thinks, is the end of it.

That is not the end of it.

The first day after the shoot, Will wakes up sweaty and disoriented. He brushes it off as long exposure to the snow and stumbles out the door to feed and brush his dogs.

The second day after the shoot, Will wakes up feeling completely wrecked, like he hasn't slept a wink, even though he basically did nothing all day and just barely managed to shovel the contents of a microwave dinner into his mouth.

The third day after the shoot, Will wakes up vomiting.

That's when Jack calls.

Will hits the answer button and pinches his nose. "Jack, this is not a good – "

"WHY HAVEN'T YOU ANSWERED MY TEXTS?"

"I enjoy the smell of urinal cake."

"ARE YOU SICK?"

Will heaves another round of vomit into the toilet and then flushes noisily, hoping that Jack will get the hint and hang up. Jack should hopefully have more important things to do with his time than bother the dog guy.

Unfortunately, after he's splashed water on his face, he looks over to his phone and finds that Jack is still on the line.

"Listen, Jack," Will says with a groan, "I came down with something after the shoot. I'll call you back later, okay?"

"Not an option. I'll be over in an hour."

"No, Jack – "

But Jack hangs up on him. Of course.

Will sighs and goes to lie back down in bed. Best case scenario, this is all a hallucination and Will can sleep the rest of the day away. Worst case scenario, Will is going to need some actual rest to prepare himself for dealing with an irate Jack on his day off.

Jack shows up and is greeted by a chorus of howls and barks from Will's pack. Will rolls out of bed, tripping over blankets and shoes, and opens the door to find an irate Jack, a blushing Miriam, and a rather green about the gills Lecter. Which wouldn't be a problem if Will was, you know, dressed.

"Um," Will says eloquently, as he watches Miriam and Lecter openly goggle at the fact that he's just wearing underpants. "I uh. I'm compelled to cover myself."

"We'll be in the kitchen," Jack mutters brusquely, pushing past him.

Will retreats to his bedroom and rummages through his drawer. He pulls out at least three pants before finding one that doesn't reek of alpha or dog, but he gives up a shirt as a lost cause and just throws a sweater over his head. It's not the best, but it'll do, at least.

When he returns, he finds Jack glowering out the window, Miriam leaning against the wall, and Lecter sitting primly at the table.

"So . . . what's this about?"

Miriam clears her throat. “We were contacted by Dr. Lecter’s agent a while ago. It appears he has taken ill.”

“I’m not a doctor?”

“Well, but he took ill the same time as you. And he has the same symptoms.”

“Are you accusing me of transmitting the flu? Because I felt fine. And I got my vaccine.”

“What Miss Lass is trying to say,” Lecter interrupts, voice rough as if he’s been coughing a lot, “is that we appear to be affected by acute bonded couple’s syndrome.”

Will stares. The ABCs are pretty rare, since most people aren’t stupid enough to separate or travel long distances apart after a bonding. It starts pretty slowly, but everyone knows the warning signs, because before it was acknowledged as a proper medical condition, lots of people used to drop dead of it. It doesn’t discriminate by designation, either; any alpha or beta or omega who falls into the ABCs is usually dead within a week or less.

“How exactly do we have the ABCs?” Will demands. He looks at Lecter. “Last I checked, you were unbonded. And I’m certainly unbonded.”

“The priest,” Lecter answers quietly.

“What about him?”

“He utilized a real wedding ceremony,” Lecter explains. “With real vows. We were bound, and he did not divorce us.”

You are married, Will recalls. *Divorce now?*

Will slumps at the table and groans. Sensing his distress, Winston slinks into the kitchen, putting a wide berth between himself and Jack, and noses up against Will’s knee. The faintest of whines issues from his throat, so Will pets him, just to have something to do with his hands – something that isn’t punching Jack in the face.

“So we should get, uh, unbonded? Right?”

When silence meets that statement, Will looks up. Because that silence wasn’t one of agreement.

“What are you not telling me?” Will asks suspiciously.

Jack shifts against the counter. He still looks mad, but now there’s the faintest tinge of constipated embarrassment. He can’t yell – not with Lecter here and so clearly ill, and yelling at ill omegas is just not done – but it’s clear he wants to yell just to get rid of all of his pent up energy. Apparently, whatever he has to say, he knows it won’t go down well with Will; just because Jack is excellent at walking over people doesn’t mean he’s unaware of the effect he has.

“We tried to speak to the priest. Apparently he went on a spiritual retreat. He won’t be back for a month. And, uh, no one else knows what he did, or is willing to try and undo it. Especially when you both are in the throes of ABCs.”

Will stares. “Are you serious?”

“Yes,” Miriam answers, when it becomes clear Jack won’t. “You two need close contact for at least a week to make up for this. No more than ten to twenty feet, at most. Otherwise – ”

“I’m aware of the side effects, thank you, Miss Lass,” Lecter says patiently. “I do believe Will and I have things to discuss. We will contact you when matters are decided, or when you manage to get into contact with the priest.”

Jack slinks out of the kitchen like a dog with his tail between his legs. Miriam makes a sad face and scurries after him.

Leaving Will alone with Lecter.

Will scrubs at his face. He’d never wanted a mate, and he’d built his house and life around not having one. But his father did raise him not to be rude. “I didn’t, uh, I hope you don’t think I have anything against you. Because I don’t. You’re hot as hell. I just – I mean – well. Yeah. I didn’t expect to take a mate.”

“Aromantic?” Lecter inquires delicately.

“No, I was, um. I took the alpha aptitude test.”

“And?”

“Possessing inadequacies that are unable to be overcome and thus unfit to be a mate,” Will says, the words like bitter salt in his mouth. He’d burnt the letter, but the words had been seared into his mind. It had been the cherry on top, given that he hadn’t even really wanted to take the test and had only done so at the insistence of the police academy he’d applied to. He’d passed everything else with flying colors, but they’d still sent him a rejection letter, and since alpha aptitude test results are publicly searchable, so had every other job Will had applied to.

Lecter blinks, just one, like he’s surprised. “A rather harsh judgment.”

“Apparently I don’t play well with others.”

“You seemed fine working with me yesterday.”

“Once alpha aptitude tests are taken, they can’t be retaken,” Will says with a laugh. “I’m stuck with it. But I was fine with it, really. I wasn’t exactly chomping at the bit to woo a mate.”

“Hmm. Neither was I,” Lecter confesses. The queasy look about him is fading, slowly easing into gentler notes of relaxation and contentment – visible, if unnerving, proof that they do have ABCs and constant contact is the remedy. “I decided I wished to establish a career for

myself before beginning a family, but alas, most of the world thinks that omegas may only have one or the other."

Will's heard that kind of talk before. And yet: "Weren't you voted sexiest omega of the decade?"

Lecter smiles, and wow, that's a lot of sharp teeth. "An object of desire from afar," Lecter corrects. "Or in illicit and badly photoshopped photographs and videos. No alpha has expressed a solid intention to court."

"Well, they definitely won't if they smell me on you," Will mutters. "So. What's our game plan?"

"As it happens, my house is large enough for all of us."

" . . . You do know I have more dogs than just the five you saw on the shoot, right?"

"House," Will echoes three hours later, trudging up through the snow to the front door where Hannibal is waiting patiently. Somehow, even half-sick with the ABCs, he's more graceful than Will and all of his dogs combined. "You said you had a *house*!"

"Yes. And please come in."

"This is a mansion!"

"I don't quite have that much acreage. Please, make yourself at home. I do request that the dogs stay on this floor, but otherwise, everything that is mine is yours to peruse or explore. Oh, and excuse me for a moment; I need to take the duck out of the oven."

Hannibal's hallway is insane, from the decorations to the artwork to the carpet. His dining room is even more so.

His kitchen smells amazing though.

"Wow, I think I've seen less professional kitchens in actual cooking shows," Will marvels from the doorway. He tsks at Buster when the dog tries to enter, and Buster whines but backs off and goes to find the rest of the back.

"It is important to use the proper tool for the task, no?" Hannibal asks.

"Yeah, but you have two ovens."

"Three, actually."

"That just . . . enforces my point."

Hannibal looks up and smiles. With every hint of nausea gone and safely ensconced in his territory, he appears to be glowing with contentment, and it passes into his scent. Breathing it in makes Will want to roll up into a blanket and doze in front of the fire. There's a reason that

omegas are highly valued in the medical field, because there's no better relaxation drug than the scent of a pleased and content omega.

"I noticed quite a few lure tying kits in your house," Hannibal points out. "We all have our vices that we take pride in. And mine comes with the benefit of feeding the alpha who has been so gracious to me. Do you have any allergies I need to work around?"

"Nope."

"Excellent. Please be seated; I shall come in with dinner shortly."

Dinner is amazing. Will nearly scarfs down his first helping, sheepishly asks for seconds, and upon seeing the way Hannibal beams, gorges himself on a third helping because eating makes him realize he skipped breakfast and lunch. Hannibal only eats one serving, but he eats with a slow elegance that means he somehow manages to finish just as Will does.

Then Hannibal does the dishes while Will settles his pack in, and after a one or two drinks, it's suddenly bedtime.

"This is all very . . . domestic," Will remarks as he follows Hannibal up his staircase.

"The ABCs can cause the emergence of nesting instincts," Hannibal points out, pushing open the door to his bedroom. He heads straight for the closet, leaving Will to poke around, admiring first the suit of armor and then gaping at the sheer size of Hannibal's bed. It's honestly big enough for five people to sleep comfortably.

When Hannibal comes back out, Will clears his throat. "You, uh, you got a guest bedroom?"

Hannibal pauses halfway into pulling on a red sweater that looks insanely soft. It's not worn or threadbare, like Will's comfiest clothing, but it has the kind of faint wear that suggests it is well used and well appreciated. "Close contact is recommended for alleviating the ABCs, Will. I promise not to molest you in your sleep," he teases.

Will swallows. "Right."

And then he changes and gets into bed with Hannibal. Because they're mated. By accident.

When Hannibal slides into bed next to him, Will closes his eyes and prays that he'll fall asleep as fast as possible. Or that he'll wake up and find it's a dream later on.

Will does not wake up to find it's all a dream, but thankfully, Hannibal doesn't bring up how Will migrated across the bed and ended up cuddling up to him, and so after that they quickly fall into a rhythm. Hannibal makes meals in between reading scripts and typing on his computer and doing whatever it is actors do in their off time, and Will busies himself with long walks with the dogs and taking new promo photographs for future gigs, and at night they trade off in front of the sink and in the shower before they crawl into bed. It's easy and comfortable and almost perfect, so much so that Will finds himself somewhat uneasy when

Hannibal brings up the suggestion of running to the store for an errand to test out whether they can begin to tolerate separation again.

It's not the ABCs; Will feels no symptoms. But he's become used to sitting in the same room as Hannibal, breathing in his scent, trading jabs and remarks during meals, and he feels a sharp sting in his breast at the idea of Hannibal going away from him.

And yet he smiles and says yes, because they are not mates.

Hannibal surprises him by touching his shoulder when he leaves, like a quiet goodbye, and so to settle his stomach Will goes to finish his latest lure. He even thinks about using it soon, about wading into the river and casting over and over until he lands the perfect fish, and coming home and presenting it to Hannibal and watching his smile and watching him cook it and watching him eat it.

Like an alpha watches an omega. Like an alpha provides for an omega. Like an alpha courts an omega.

Will lets his head fall on the desk with a thump.

He thumps it again for good measure when he can't manage to dismiss the thoughts.

Then he sighs, fishes out of his phone to text Hannibal, and goes to find his car keys.

Hannibal is very determinedly stirring something in his kitchen when Will gets back. He doesn't even appear to hear Will's return, but when Will steps into the kitchen, the look on Hannibal's face is like a balm to Will's unsettled stomach – surprise, relief, happiness. All of the emotions appear too quickly to be faked, and scent never lies.

Will asks, "So did you get everything you needed?"

"Yes. There was a good sale."

"And, uh, no side effects?"

"None. We appear to be fully recovered from the ABCs."

"And go back to our normal lives?"

Hannibal resumes stirring. To Will's eyes, the mixture apparently thoroughly mixed, but it's not like Will can judge him for wanting to be doing something with his hands. "Yes, if that is your wish."

Will takes a deep breath. "What if it's not?"

Hannibal slows. Stops. Looks up.

Will slowly pulls out the wrapped fish from under his coat. He lays it on the counter and carefully unwraps it. It is freshly caught, glistening and damp, and it's the biggest fish Will's

ever caught. He took great care when removing the hook, so there isn't a hint of damage on it, and he threw back every single one with even the slightest defect, so it's as beautiful as though it was a painting brought to life. It isn't a grand gesture, but it's the truest expression of what Will is, and that's the entire point.

"I present to you the best of me," Will says, mouth numb as he repeats the traditional words. "I have caught this with my own hands, the best I could find, and for you alone. Will you accept my gift and request to court you?"

Hannibal reaches out very slowly, as if he thinks the fish is going to suddenly flop over and fall off the counter if he startles it. "This is . . . this is beautiful, Will."

Will swallows. "But?"

"But I can't accept this," Hannibal says all in a rush. "This is just the ABCs clouding your judgment, you can't possibly want – no. I am sorry, Will. But I cannot in good conscience accept this."

And, well, that is not what Will expected to here. Or rather, he expected refusal, but not for that reason.

"You think I can't want you?" Will repeats.

"I want to have a career, Will. I cannot offer you a family."

"I have a family. You've been tripping over my dogs for a week now. I just want you. Hannibal, you're smart, and you're a great cook, and you're a great conversational, and I've seen you practice a dozen different roles and be as equally convincing in all of them. It's like watching a shapeshifter; you slip into each skin so perfectly. I'm not, I mean, I'm not perfect, but I – I'd want to see you continue that. I just. I don't know. Maybe a date?"

A slow smile drifts over Hannibal's face. He lays a couple fingers on the fish, shuddering as if he is just now realizing it is real. "A date. That's all you want?"

"Well, we kinda started off with the wrong step. I figured I should do it properly. Like my dad taught me."

"A proper southern gentleman," Hannibal muses. "But you're selling yourself short. You've very kind, Will. Not just to me, but to Miriam and Jack and your dogs. And you've been very considerate of me. I think that alpha aptitude test was quite wrong. I think you're a perfect alpha."

He closes his hand around the fish, and then he's beaming, so bright Will fears he might go blind, but he can't possibly look away from Hannibal now. Not when he smells so completely happy.

"I accept your gift," Hannibal says formally. "Let us court, so that we might know if our future path is meant to be walked together."

And then they're kissing, and tripping over Will's very curious dogs, and stumbling upstairs, and they don't eat dinner until midmorning when Will's stomach starts rumbling and Hannibal decides he should make a tiny meal that turns into a full on banquet that turns into cuddling on the sofa and feeding each other. And it's utterly and completely perfect.

Jack shows up three days with the priest. "I'm here to unbond you so we can all get on with our lives," he growls when Will opens the door.

Before Will can even muster a single word in response, Hannibal pads up behind him and folds his arms around his waist, nuzzling into his neck, every inch the very contended omega mate. Jack stares.

"I'm afraid we no longer require your services," Hannibal says politely. "We are quite happily bonded. Good day."

The priest smiles widely and inclines his head.

Jack's shouting is so loud that Will's dogs start howling up a storm.

The movie shoots to the top of the box office. Apparently when the biggest star turns up to the red carpet beaming with a brand new husband on his arm and tells everyone who'll hold still long enough the story about how the movie brought them together, like destiny or fate, audiences really, really get invested.

FINIS

Chapter End Notes

A/N: And then Hannibal and Will sign a multi-picture deal and make lots of romance movies and have a great life together. Jack gets invited to be best man since he brought them together. The priest gets invited to do vow renewals. Will's dogs are the ring bearers and flower doggies.

Hint for Day 3: It involves sexy wrestling. Stay tuned for the reveal tomorrow!

Mpreg - Omega!Will & Alpha!Hannibal

Chapter Summary

In a world where the winner of a heat match is the one who proves they are stronger and thus undergoes the transformation into the omega who carries the child, Will and Hannibal enter their first heat after the cliff fall and fight for the honor of carrying their child.

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Mpreg, if that squicks you or isn't your cup of tea. And knotting. And some bloodshed (not a lot, but they definitely sink their teeth in and draw blood)

Inspired by: There was a post floating around on the hellsite about some wrestlers, and how it would be cool if there was A/B/O AU where people wrestled when they went into heat, and the loser became the omega and the winner became the alpha. I'm just, uh, changing it up a little bit, so that the winner becomes the omega, because childbirth is hard, y'all, and I think it wouldn't be too farfetched for Mother Nature to assign the stronger winner the role of baby carrier.

Dynamics: Omega!Will & Alpha!Hannibal

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In retrospect, Hannibal really should have seen it coming.

Of the two of them, after all, it is Hannibal is the morning person and Will the night owl. In the three years since they passed over the cliff and retreated to lick their wounds in the boat Chiyoh had provided, the only times Will has arisen before Hannibal have been when Hannibal was beset by fever and delirious. Will had been the constant companion at his side, day or night, rising early every morning to prepare food and medication and gently coaxing it down his throat like a mother bird tends to a helpless chick. Slowly but surely, both of their wounds had healed, and then Hannibal’s natural sleeping cycle had reasserted itself, meaning that it is usually Hannibal who awakens first and enjoys a few hours of Will dead to world beside him, snoring and soft in sleep.

This morning, though, when Hannibal awakens, it is to an empty, cold bed, with no Will to pull close and hold.

A quick sniff confirms that Will departed several hours ago, for his scent is faint. A mighty feat, that; Hannibal has become even more of a light sleeper now that they are on the run. Jack and the FBI have never come close, of course, but Hannibal is very aware of just what he stands to lose, and so he takes every precaution and then some. If either of them have even the faintest suspicion that the FBI is near, they are gone by nightfall.

Hannibal pushes away the covers, breathing in the cool morning air, and makes his way to the bathroom. Sometimes Mother Nature calls and Will rises to relieve himself, but usually these are hurried trips, like a mouse scurrying across an open plain, ever wary of a hawk's sharp eye and even sharper talons, and within minutes Will usually returns.

But the bathroom is empty. Hannibal can feel the change in humidity – Will must have taken a very quick shower – and he can see how the arrangement of their makeup is slightly off, so Will must have decided to leave the house, otherwise he wouldn't have bothered to slather on concealer to cover up his distinctive scars.

Hannibal prowls downstairs, unease pooling in his gut. Will is not an extrovert by nature; if Hannibal did not take him out to dine in fine restaurants and be party to beautiful sights and attend divine operas, he imagines Will might be content to stay in their little house forever, ordering in food and cultivating his readily growing stock of fish lures. Hannibal, of course, does not begrudge him this habit, for Will's habits of fishing and lure tying are far less easily traced by the FBI than Hannibal's tastes in harpsichords and theremins, but it still stands that Will hardly ever leaves the house without Hannibal.

The kitchen is untouched. There are no signs of a fight and Will's scent, while faded, is calm. Hannibal detects no hint of stress, and the plates on which Will constructed and ate his breakfast are neatly washed and drying in the rack.

Hannibal moves on to the dining room. It's more of a nook than a room, to be honest, a small little alcove with a curved window and just enough space for a table and three chairs.

A small breath of relief leaves Hannibal when he spots it. The agreed upon signal for having to flee separately is to move the third chair out of place, and they've had to use it twice, but not this time. So Will did not fear for their safety and leave him behind without saying goodbye; he must be doing something else then.

It's when Hannibal moves into the hallway that he spots it: a strangely empty study room. Beforehand, it had a very comfortable sofa, two sturdy desks, and a handful of bookshelves and knickknacks. Now all of the furniture has been pushed neatly to one side and carefully arranged, and the bookshelves are emptied with stacks of books piled just outside of the door. Even the rug, purchased by Will on a whim for the fish designs, is rolled up and resting on the sofa.

In its place is a very simple large mat. It's thick and, when Hannibal tests it with a foot, cushioned. And quite new as well.

A new suspicion takes root in Hannibal's mind. He has, after all, seen advertisements for these types of mats.

A creak echoes through the hallway, and Hannibal moves back into the hallway just in time to see Will enter. His cheeks are flushed from the cold hair, his hair is in disarray from the wind, and his hands are full of shopping bags stuffed to the brim with ingredients. Hannibal inhales to get a better idea of what Will has brought home, moving forward to welcome his Will home, and then stops abruptly short when Will's head comes up and a delicious scent, like warm baked bread and freshly cut lemon, wafts through the air to Hannibal's nose.

The unease in Hannibal's stomach vanishes, but in its place, something new and thrilling sets his stomach roiling.

"You're . . . in heat," Hannibal says carefully.

Will unwinds his scarf from his neck, settling his bags down. "Yes," he says simply.

There's no denying it. Everyone goes into heat once a year, after all, and suppressants are only useful if taken in advance, for once the cycle begins, the body will not stop until the cycle is finished or the body is sated. It's usually not a problem, but for the fact that when two people are living in close quarters and constant contact, once one person goes into heat, usually the other follows closely afterwards. It's how couples end up synced.

Will brushes past him into the kitchen, Hannibal trailing after him like one of Will's dogs. Will says nothing, just setting about unpacking the bags of food, water, and other supplies.

"When did you feel it begin?" Hannibal asks.

Will hums. "This morning. I was . . . surprised. Neither of us has had a heat since the fall."

"Our bodies were healing."

"I think it's because of the hunt last week," Will says thoughtfully. "It's the first time we've hunted together in a while. Usually one of us observes."

It makes sense. Jack has been looking for the two of them, not just one, so they ensure that most of the pigs are slaughtered in such a manner that the police would finger one killer – if they even considered it foul play – and Hannibal does, of course, get immense enjoyment out of watching Will tear into his prey. But last week they'd both had fun, partly for the sheer joy of it and partially because their prey had run into a rather large forest and it had taken them both to cover ground effectively. And Mother Nature does love to trigger heats after a compatible encounter when the blood is pumping.

Still. There are questions that must be asked, even if Hannibal does not want to. He clears his throat. "Do you wish me to procure suppressants?"

Will scoffs. "You're a doctor. You know no suppressant can truly stop a heat. Unless you put me into a coma."

The thought of beautiful, expressive Will unmoving and still in a coma is anathema. Hannibal cannot comprehend that any more than he can comprehend a world when the sun no longer

rises. “Absolutely not. If we need to leave for any reason, it will make things far too difficult.”

Will’s eyes are knowing as he nods, but he doesn’t call Hannibal on it. “That too.”

“Then . . . do you wish me to remain?”

Will finishes with one bag and neatly folds it in half, setting it aside. He starts digging into the next bag, unloading what looks like an entire produce section. “You got me into this, so yes, you’re staying,” he says matter-of-factly. “We have a score to settle.”

Then he nudges one of the bags he left on the floor. “Clothes are in there. Get dressed.”

Hannibal moves forward, as helpless as a fish on the hook, half-paralyzed at the thought of Will in heat, smelling ten times more divine than he already is and even more delicious to taste. He can already feel the way his body is reacting to Will’s scent; soon, he too will enter heat, and then they will lock into a feedback loop of heat and madness until they are both sated, or one of them is dead.

Will pulls away when he reaches out, though. “You know the rules,” he teases, eyes sparkling with fire. “No touching until the match begins.”

It takes all of Hannibal’s self-control not to start the match then and there, in the kitchen. Instead he carefully takes the bag of clothing and walks as quickly as he can upstairs to the bedroom, breathing in the cool air that isn’t saturated with Will’s heat scent.

It’s no use, of course, because when Hannibal takes out the clothes Will has purchased the most traditional of outfits for a heat match: short and tight grappling shorts, black as night and so small that Hannibal won’t even be able to wear underwear under it. The material is stretchy, of course, but only to a point; it is meant to last a match and then be torn to shreds so coupling can begin as soon as a match is included.

Hannibal slips into the bathroom to change and prays he’ll last as long as one match.

Will is sitting on the mat when he returns to the study room, legs crossed, skin flushed from the heat. Stripped of his clothes and with whatever concealer he’d been wearing washed away, he smells like citrus and bread with the faintest tinge of burnt caramel, sweet and smoky, and when his nostrils flare, Hannibal realizes that he must be able to smell Hannibal as well.

Will breathes in and out, deep and slow. “You’re in heat now too.”

“You are my most compatible mate,” Hannibal replies simply. He crosses to the mat and sits down as well, legs crossed, facing Will and preparing for judgment. Will could, of course, always refuse him, even now.

“Fortunately or unfortunately,” Will says. He opens his eyes, which are suffused with bright gold, the last indicator of a person descending into proper heat, where they will fight with

anything to get relief. When his eyes are completely gold, he will lose all rational thought, unable to recognize anyone or anything and willing to kill anyone or anything in his way. Even Hannibal won't be immune, since they aren't synced.

Yet, anyways.

Hannibal studies him. There isn't a hint of hesitation in Will; he appears completely relaxed, and completely comfortable to be bared of all clothing but for the traditional shorts. He has had longer to contemplate a heat match than Hannibal, more hours to realize what is happening and think about what must happen, but Hannibal still finds himself a tad reluctant to push.

After all, the last time Will was in heat, Hannibal denied him – he gutted Will and he destroyed Abigail and he left them on the floor to bleed out. Will might have forgiven him, but instincts are not so easily persuaded.

"Are you sure?"

Will grins, sharp and fierce, like a cat just realizing its claws and teeth can draw blood. "I came back here, didn't I? I could have booked a hotel."

A rumble rolls through Hannibal's stomach, so fast that his lips are parting and allowing the sound to escape as a growl before he can consciously close it back down. To imagine Will writhing in heat is divine; to imagine him doing it in a dirty hotel room surrounded by coveting strangers is unacceptable. Hannibal alone has earned the right to be near Will when it happens, even if it is to merely stand guard and provide nourishment.

Will looks unbelievably satisfied. "Besides, I was . . . curious."

"About what would happen?"

"About who might win," Will clarifies. He unfolds his legs and pushes himself to his feet. "Are you ready?"

Hannibal had once offered to teach Will how to fight, after their wounds had healed and they had become bored of sitting around waiting to they reached the shore. Will had laughed and shrugged off the offer. Hannibal cannot deny that part of him is ravenous to find out just how well his mongoose strikes.

And so Hannibal stands, and offers his hand, and nods. "To first yield."

"To first blood," Will corrects.

Hannibal cocks his head. It's not unusual, of course, for a match to only end at the taste of blood, but usually yielding is sufficient. And Hannibal of course has no objection – part of him thrills at the thought of sinking his teeth into Will and sucking his beloved's blood into his mouth – but it soothing to know that Will wants this, wants this so much that he doesn't want to be declared loser or winner until one of them breaks skin.

"Unless you think you could make me yield without spilling blood?"

“I could.”

Will’s grin widens. “No, you couldn’t.”

“Well, I suppose we’ll find out.”

Heat matches are nature’s way of assuring that only the best and strongest go on to carry a child. After all, childbirth can be dangerous and difficult, and most often the omega is the one who raises the child. Thus the only way to enter those hallowed ranks is to enter a heat match and win it fairly and squarely. Without a true victory, the loser will not develop the knot that allows for the release of sperm and the winner will not develop the internal opening that allows for the release of an egg into the uterus. And it must a victory truly earned, for any performance enhancing drugs will interfere with the pheromone production. Weapons are sometimes allowed, but if they are used end a match too soon, it will all be for naught.

That being said, a person can fight just as fiercely without a weapon.

Hannibal and Will wrestle on the mats, teeth snaps and nails scratching and fingers digging, trying to gain the upper hand or get a solid grip. Sweat slicks their skin, making a hold difficult, and with no clothes to snag, they must rely on skin. Hannibal has cultivated a lifetime of experience, but he is used to hunting lambs who bleat and flee rather than fight; Will has been trained, but he is used to civilized spars or clumsy drunks.

They are neither of them exactly what the other is used to, and neither is willing to give ground.

Hannibal makes a grab for Will’s curls, long and thick since they haven’t been to a hairdresser, and pulls to bare Will’s throat – Will responds with a savage snap of teeth and a sharp kick to Hannibal’s shin. They separate, panting like wolves.

“How fiercely you fight, my mongoose,” Hannibal says.

Will bears his teeth. “You will give me a child, Hannibal. You owe me.”

“Why do you think I am trying to win?”

“No, Hannibal,” Will says, voice chiding like addressed to a child. “You will give me a child on *my* terms.”

Hannibal pauses. Heat makes it difficult to think, thoughts traveling as slowly as though drenched in molasses, but if Will speaks truly . . . “You wish to be the omega?”

Will nods.

A part of it appeals to Hannibal – to plant his seed inside of Will, to see Will’s stomach swell, to feed Will enough for two lives. To know that Will has chosen to tie them irrevocably together and carry the proof inside of him, sheltered and safe, until their child is ready to emerge into the world.

But that would mean losing.

“I don’t enter fights to lose, my dear Will.”

“Oh, I know. And maybe next time, the honor can be yours. But I am getting that child.”

“You will get one regardless.”

“Yes. But I want one on my terms. And I will get what I want.”

Yielding to Will would be delicious. If Hannibal wasn’t heat-mad and delirious with the desire to win and pin Will down, he might even fully consider it. But he is in the grip of heat now, and every fiber of his being is howling for victory, to close his teeth around Will’s neck and taste his blood and carry his seed, and he will not yield without being forced to.

So instead of answering Will with more words, he strikes out again.

Time bleeds away. The world takes on a golden hue. The air is thick with their mingled scent, driving them to continue fighting even as their breathing becomes harsh and the mat becomes drenched with sweat. Yet still they press on.

Finally, it ends when Hannibal hesitates, just for a moment, trying to decide whether to feint or to retreat, and Will lunges forward, swinging himself around Hannibal to pin his legs to the ground and yank him back by his hair, fingers twisted so tightly in the roots that Hannibal feels several hairs leave his head. Will’s grip is unforgiving and brutal, and Hannibal earns bruises on top of bruises trying to wriggle free.

He stops when he feels the cool touch of metal to his throat.

It takes several tries to remember how to speak. “A knife?” Hannibal croaks.

Will digs the knife in a little more firmly. “Yes. Do you remember it?”

Hannibal inhales. The scent leads to a particular door in his memory palace, dusty and small and filled with blood and rain. Hannibal says, “My linoleum knife. You kept it.”

“It was evidence, actually.” Will leans down, breath like lava against Hannibal’s overheated skin. “You were so careful not to puncture my dormant uterus, Hannibal. So, so careful. And now I’m going to make full use of that care. You’re going to give me a child, and I’m going to carry them to term, and then we’re going to raise them together.”

Hannibal closes his eyes. He still doesn’t want to lose, but he no longer is in the position of having a clear mind to think his way out of Will’s grip. He can already feel the blood rushing downwards to expand the skin that will become his knot.

Will senses it, or perhaps he simply knows that he has won. Either way, when he sinks his teeth into Hannibal’s neck, it feels like a foregone conclusion.

After that, the knife is cast to the side, the shorts are torn off, and they make love right then and there, frantic and desperate until at last it is done, and the wave of heat begins to recede

as they fulfill its principle demand.

Hannibal strokes Will's sides and back, soothing his mate on instinct as Will tries to bring his breathing back under control. It's easy to coax his omega to roll over so they can rest on their sides, curled together on the mat to cuddle and take comfort in each other's scent until Hannibal's knot recedes and they can separate and do it all over again until their heat is finally extinguished.

Which may take a while. Heats that come back after a drought are usually fiercer.

Hannibal sighs. "You won."

"Told you." Will yawns and wriggles in place, settling himself even further into Hannibal's embrace and snickering at the way Hannibal stiffens at the movement that yanks at the tender place they are joined. "You're not on birth control, right?"

"No."

Hannibal knows Will can understand everything he doesn't dare say in that word – his hope against hope for a heat, for a match, for a child – and is rewarded by a kiss, soft and sweet against the backdrop of their savage fight. Part of it is instinct, for introducing more of Will's pheromones into Hannibal's system will ensure a proper sync, so that they will always be bound and go into heat together. But part of it is emotion too, the relief that Hannibal also dreamed of a child and a future and the thrill of victory.

Will pats at his chest. "There's always next time. I'll go easy on you."

"No, you won't."

"Probably not." Will flashes a smile. "And you wouldn't have me any other way."

When the heat is done, they have utterly destroyed the study room, furniture and mats and all. Hannibal carries Will up to their bedroom and watches in contented silence as his mate pulls at the blankets and fusses with the pillows until he makes a nice little nest to curl up in. Hannibal did his best to keep them fed and watered, of course, but heat is a strenuous marathon, and they are both exhausted.

"You will want for nothing," Hannibal vows as he climbs in next to Will. He fits a palm over Will's stomach, slim for now but soon to be rounded with their slumbering child. "This I swear."

"The only thing I want," Will whispers, "is you. You and our child and a home for us to share." He pauses. "And maybe a dog."

Hannibal would be willing to slaughter every single person in the FBI. Finding a dog seems a small challenge after that.

Although he will have to find a new home. This house, while acceptable, is not what Hannibal would consider suitable for a pregnancy and a birth and a child. Will is going to

need privacy, and cozy rooms to build nests and a nursery, and large grounds so that he does not feel crowded or watched by prying eyes. And Hannibal will need somewhere with a larger pantry to satisfy an appetite for three.

Will pokes him. “Quit thinking. You’re making it impossible for me to sleep. Just breathe in the moment, Hannibal.” He covers Hannibal’s hand with his own. “In nine months, you and me and baby are going to be a family.”

“Yes,” Hannibal says. “Yes, we are.”

FINIS

Chapter End Notes

A/N: And then they have the baby, and they send Jack a baby christening notification, and they continue to do that for each new baby they add until Jack is like "OMG THEY'RE MAKING A GODDAMN CANNIBAL DYNASTY OVER THERE". Sometimes Will is the omega and sometimes Hannibal is. But each time they wrestle until first blood.

Hint for Day 4: It involves that trope where people pledge to get married at a certain age and then it's that age and whoopsies, time for a marriage. Stay tuned for the reveal tomorrow!

Beta Pairings - Beta!Will & Beta!Hannibal

Chapter Summary

When Prince Will turns eighteen, a banquet is held in honor: officially to celebrate his birthday, unofficially so his regents can have their pick of a suitor who can control Will as thoroughly as his regents have. It's all abruptly derailed when a monster bursts in, declaring that his name is Hannibal and he is owed Will's hand, all due to a promise they made years ago to be wed if both were unmarried when they came of age - a promise, it is foretold, that if broken brings down destiny's wrath upon them all.

Chapter Notes

Warnings: voyeurism, specifically discussions of people watching Will bathe and dress to demonstrate the totality of their control over him, but there is no touching and no sex

Inspired by: The Witcher episode 4: "Of Banquets, Bastards and Burials". Specifically a scene towards the end, where someone screams and two people get married. (I'm being vague cuz it's only recently been released.)

Dynamics: Beta!Will & Beta!Hannibal

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Will turns eighteen, a banquet is held in his honor. Ostensibly, it is to celebrate the coming of age of the crown prince, the heir to the throne, the keen eyed raven soon to soar above them all. But Will isn't a fool; he is well aware that this banquet is merely a cover for numerous suitors to swoop in and offer their hand in marriage. Will is, after all, a beta; there does not need to be the careful arranging of a match that would be required for an alpha or an omega, since a beta can conform to anyone. An alpha or omega may refuse someone who smells terrible, but a beta has no such recourse. Will knows he's going to be stuck with whomever has paid his regents the highest price, and the prospect is miserable enough that he drags his feet as he prepares himself for the banquet.

Sure enough, Brown comes calling just as Will is finishing with his bath.

"Come, wipe that frown off of your face," Brown cajoles, flitting about Will's chamber like an overexcited rat. "Today we celebrate your birthday!"

"Not the one I want," Will mutters. Unfortunately, he can't shake off his regents until he turns one-and-twenty, so he has three more years stuck under the thumb of the likes of Lord

Matthew Brown and Doctor Frederick Chilton. They'd been picked because they had promised to care for Will as their own; Will has since learned there's a reason neither have a wife or child.

"Aw, don't be so gloomy," Brown chides. "Three more years will be nothing, you'll see. Time flies by quickly when you're an adult."

Will snorts. He doesn't bother trying to go behind his privacy curtain to get changed; Brown will just follow. On top of that, Brown and Chilton have insisted on yearly and invasive physical examinations, so it's not like they haven't seen him naked before.

"How many suitors will I have to entertain before you pick who I'm to marry?"

Brown pastes an innocent look on his face. It's not very convincing. "Everyone is just here to wish you a happy birthday," he insists. "No one will be requesting your hand in marriage."

"And you have no desire to hand me off to someone the second I turn one-and-twenty, so that I am controlled day and night?"

"How could you accuse me of such a thing, my prince? I only want the best for you."

Will doesn't bother responding to that. There's no point.

His servants have already laid out his banquet attire; it's all very . . . flashy. And revealing, because Brown and Chilton are of the opinion that it's best that he demonstrate isn't one of those brute kings who swaggers around with a big sword and even bigger crown. Will is of the opinion that he can communicate such a message without wearing shirt and pants so tight they squeeze the breath out of him, but he's been overruled so often that the only nonrevealing banquet formal attire left in Will's closet are his boots and his crown.

Will shimmies into his pants and shirt, tuning out Brown's ramblings, but it's okay, because they start to steadily slow as Will adds more and more gold and lace to his outfit.

Finally, he's dressed. "Can I go now?"

Brown sweeps over, clucking like a hen. He grabs a comb and drags it roughly through Will's hair, yanking like he wants to pull out the curls and squirrel them away to hide them under his pillow. Will honestly wouldn't be surprised.

"You must appear perfectly attired, my prince," Brown scolds. "No one will respect a king who cannot dress themselves properly."

"If I ever become king."

"In two years, your birthday banquet will follow your coronation, so yes, you will be king. Now! Let's go. A king mustn't be late."

Will rolls his eyes, enjoying his last moment of peace, and then he follows Brown dutifully into the corridor. There are six guards outside, and four immediately snap to attention before marching themselves into formation around Will. The remaining two stay outside Will's

chambers, because it is decreed that for the safety of the kingdom, Will can never be left alone. Practically, though, it just means Chilton and Brown can know where he is at all times, because he's never without two guards at his door or four surrounding him.

"Let the show begin," Will murmurs, and then he lifts his head and marches down the corridor. Just because everyone at court knows Will is under the thumb of Brown and Chilton doesn't mean Will has to give in and show everyone irrefutable proof.

Will spends the first half of the banquet bored out of his mind as the bards sing a very long tale about the kingdom's history, from the very first king, William the Conqueror, to Will's late father. He manages to stay upright mostly out of long practice, but he does give a little sigh of relief once it ends and the food is served.

Chilton sweeps in then, prompting a flurry of quick horn blasts to announce a regent of the realm. Will ignores it; Chilton always likes entering late to make a dramatic appearance.

"Where is your crown?" Chilton demands. "And why are you frowning? Sit up straight!"

Will does straighten, but he doesn't change his face. Chilton thinks any expression that isn't a vapid smile is a frown, after all.

"Let him one night without a crown, and just be the birthday boy," Brown says.

Chilton glares at him. "He is the birthday boy, but he is also the prince! Bring Prince Will's crown, at once."

Will lets them squabble it out. The one good thing about having Brown and Chilton as the regents is that they detest each other, so, if Will is patient, they start arguing with each other and leave him alone entirely, which is always a good thing. Sometimes he can even pit them against each other to wriggle out of things he truly has no wish to do. But on the other hand, sometimes they are in agreement, which usually means Will has a terrible thing to look forward to.

Case in point: being betrothed.

Chilton wins the argument about the crown, so Will gets a big gaudy crown of gold and rubies to balance on his head. He much prefers his father's circlet – thin and not ostentatious – but Chilton had ordered the crown made when Will turned ten and never passes up a chance to mock him for struggling to keep his head straight under its weight. It was made for a full grown adult's head, after all, not molded to Will's as is the usual tradition.

Then the parade of suitors begins, some speaking to Brown and some appealing to Chilton, so Will leans back in his chair and lets his mind drift. He'll have no input in this charade, so he doesn't bother to try and keep up appearances. If princes and lords and dukes really do want Will's kingdom enough to ask for the hand of a beta who isn't even paying attention to them, that's on them.

Besides, Will has long since learned the value of being underestimated.

Six long-winded speakers in, an alpha with the most ostentatious robes Will has ever seen sweeps onto the floor, bows so low he nearly falls over, and then bows again. Chilton and Brown both incline their heads in return, and so Will tunes in because he's pretty sure he's found the man rich enough to pay off both of his regents.

"My good prince," cries the alpha. "I am Mason Verger, here to offer you my tales of glory and humbly request your hand in marriage."

For all that Chilton and Brown keep Will away from the privy council and affairs of the kingdom, he was forced to learn all about the nobles and kingdoms around him, if only to know who was allied, who was an enemy, and who could potentially be made an ally. The Vergers have a massive amount of land, making up in cattle and pigs for what they lack in people to till the land or pay taxes, but Will's well aware of the rumors that Verger has a sadistic streak and replaces his squires yearly not because they are incompetent but because he makes them disappear.

Now that he's looking at the man, Will's pretty sure those rumors are more true than not.

Fortunately, a ruckus of clanging and swears erupts from outside the main doors, cutting off Verger mid-word so that Will doesn't have to listen to any more of his oily and over the top nonsense. Chilton gestures for Verger to keep going, but it becomes moot within seconds because the doors open and a guard is bodily flung through, landing hard on the pavement and not getting up.

Will grabs a knife and hides it on his lap. Chilton yells for guards. Brown stands up.

They all freeze when a man enters, skin black as night, legs bent backwards at the joint like a deer, antlers stained with blood. He has no armor and no weapons, only wickedly sharp claws at the ends of his fingers, but he gently wipes them on his pants as he slowly walks into the center of the hall.

The entire court descends into total and complete silence. Even the guards are too taken aback to attack him.

The man takes full advantage of that silence. "Good afternoon, Lord Brown, Dr. Chilton." He pauses, and sweeps into a low bow. "Prince Will."

And Will – Will knows that voice, as surely as he knows his own, so when he bites down on his lips to suppress his instinctive greeting, he tastes blood in his mouth. From the way the man's nose twitches, Will knows he can smell it.

"My name is Hannibal Lecter, and I am here to claim what I am owed."

Whispers spread throughout the room. The Lecter dynasty was once the most powerful in the entire continent, until a brutal winter combined with a surprise attack from jealous former allies snuffed out the life of the royal family. The king and queen were slaughtered, and the young prince and princess vanished, supposedly escaping into the forests to die a slow death in the icy cold. Squabbling amongst the lords broke up the vast lands; now the kingdom is

nothing but a barren wasteland of ice and snow, and few even acknowledge it as belonging to the Lecters.

Will had heard about the attack, when he'd been a child. It had been his first experience with court politics, Will's father debating whether to send aid to an old friend and risk angering the new lords in power or to ignore the situation entirely and abandon the children of an old friend to a slow death, either in the woods or at the hands of the usurpers.

Will's father had eventually been coaxed by his advisors to do nothing, and so the Lecter dynasty had faded from memory, only spoken of in songs and tales.

Chilton recovers first. "What do you want, imposter? Hannibal Lecter died over thirteen years ago; you couldn't be him."

"Humans can survive in the wilderness for longer than anyone might assume," Hannibal responds. "I certainly learned as such. And what I want is very simple: I want what was promised to me. I want the hand of Prince Will in marriage, as I am owed, for he vowed to me as I vowed to him that so long as we were both eighteen and unmarried, we would be wed."

Chilton is aghast – he knows as well as Will knows that Hannibal can't be controlled like any other lord, for the Lecters were far more powerful than any other kingdom – but he also isn't stupid. "Will knows that he has to do what is right for the kingdom. He wouldn't make such a promise to a – a monster."

"On the contrary," Hannibal says, "a monster may be exactly what this kingdom needs. Every year, the Tiers encroach on your land, and you have not the strength to drive them off."

More murmurings rustle about the court. Openly, it was declared that Will's father had claimed and cultivated land that actually belonged to the Tiers, and so it was formally returned to them. In truth, Chilton had yielded to their demands because they didn't have the soldiers to fight to keep it, even though Will had mourned the loss of the farmland he'd once summered at. They'd also lost the most valuable and agriculturally rich land in the kingdom in that surrender.

Chilton sets his jaw. "He still wouldn't have made such a foolish promise."

"But he did," Hannibal replies calmly. "A Promise Vow, spoken with a clear mind and an open heart, and you and I both know such a thing cannot be taken back without destiny unleashing a calamity upon us all. So then, regent: do us all a favor and give me my betrothed, so that we might avoid destiny's wrath."

And, well, Will had made the vow to Hannibal the creature, the one who had found him lost in the woods and who had guided him home and who had played with him and wrestled with him and shared stories and food, but he doesn't see any reason to take it back from Hannibal the Lecter King. If anything, he's rather pleased to find that the beta who'd stolen him from his guards and nurtured his mind and sharp tongue in the forest is also a king, powerful enough to cast aside Chilton and Brown.

So Will stands and clear his throat. “He speaks the truth. I made the pledge three years ago, and I meant it as much then as I do now.”

Brown whirls on Will, for once as distraught as Chilton over something Will has done to irritate Chilton. “Will, how could you?” he wails. “You promised us no secrets!”

“A Promise Vow is no secret,” Will says. “Each and every word is recorded in the Tower, and only those who have spoken truly may enter into the chamber and add their names to the list. Hannibal has already done so. Haven’t you?”

Hannibal grins, teeth shockingly white against his dark skin. “I didn’t leave for a month to go sightseeing, my dear.”

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a neatly tied scroll, unrolling it to reveal the shimmering golden words that are a perfect chronicle of their Promise Vow. The words are inlaid with magic, and the Tower provides a copy to each person brave enough and strong enough to climb all of those stairs.

“This is destiny,” Hannibal says, twisting to show the scroll to the entire court, for everyone knows at once the magical ink of the Tower. “This is a Promise Vow. And it must be honored.”

“Destiny is nothing but a fake tale, paddled to morons who swallow it without bothering to question its veracity,” Chilton spits. “And you are even more of a moron for thinking we might be tricked into believing either of your claims. Prince Will needs an alpha, and you’re just a lowly beta. Clearly, you’ve cast a spell upon our dear prince, but every spell can be broken with the caster’s death. Guards! Kill him.”

“No!” Will cries, but the guards were all hired by Chilton or Brown, so they ignore Will and converge upon Hannibal.

Chilton grabs Will, fingers pressing so hard Will can feel bruises blossoming in his wake, and yanks him close. “As for you,” Chilton says, “I think it’s time for a lesson in obedience. We’ve let you become too caught up in yourself. I think a nice spell in the dungeon will do wonders for you.”

“Perhaps we might even let you see your monster’s head on a pike outside of the window,” Brown chimes in, leaning over to seize Will’s other arm.

Will’s fought back against Chilton and Brown before, and this wouldn’t even be his first spell in the dungeon, but this time, the rage bubbles up beneath Will’s skin, and he releases it in a feral, wordless scream of anger. He’s let Chilton and Brown walk all over him, run the kingdom into financial ruin, even chain him in the dungeon and make him beg for food and water, but killing Hannibal is the last straw.

He doesn’t even realize what’s happening until Chilton releases him with a cry of pain, looking shocked at his seared fingers.

“What the – ”

It's the only words Chilton gets out before the rage bursts free, Will's scream rising to the rafters and blowing back every single person from his radius like a blast of powerful wind. Chilton goes flying and smacks into a banister; Brown is thrown like a ragdoll against the wall. Even the guards and guests and servants are flung in all directions.

Only Hannibal remains untouched, and once the winds of Will's scream die down, Hannibal is able to ascend up the stairs to him, his way no longer blocked by guards or even the table.

"And destiny speaks again in our favor," Hannibal says softly, a fierce smile upon his face. His hands are still dripping with blood of disemboweled guards, but Will throws his arms around him anyways.

"I thought you'd forgotten," Will says, because Hannibal had vanished for a month and then never mentioned the Promise Vow again. "I thought you dismissed it as silly nonsense."

"A King never takes destiny lightly, and a Promise Vow is perhaps the only paddle we have to steer its course," Hannibal replies.

"Should we run away, then? Go back to your kingdom, start anew."

Hannibal hums. "I think we have no need for that."

When Will raises a questioning eyebrow, Hannibal nods in the direction of Chilton. Will turns around and sees that Chilton's neck is at a very odd angle, and his face is slack; clearly when he'd flown backward, he'd hit the banister hard enough to break his neck. Brown, on the other hand, has suffered a similar fate; his skull is practically flat as a pancake.

"The regents are dead," Hannibal says thoughtfully. "Long live the King."

The words are echoed by shaken lords and ladies; clearly, nobody wishes to meddle with Will now that destiny has spoken so clearly.

"Am I truly King?"

"If anyone objects, they are welcome to fight me on it."

Dead silence is the answer to that challenge, as well as quiet squeaking and clanking as guards edge away, clearly terrified both of Will and Hannibal now. After all, with Chilton and Brown dead, it is Will who controls their purses, for they had made no arrangements for regents to succeed them, too full of themselves to contemplate a time when they might not be in control of Will.

Will looks up at Hannibal. "Well, then. My first act as King shall be to break the horrendous curse upon you," he says, and so he leans up on his tiptoes and kisses Hannibal, as he's always wanted to since the moment he first greeted Hannibal after a month long absence and realized he was in love.

Hannibal kisses him back, and slowly but surely the inky darkness of his skin bleeds away, antlers shrinking and legs straightening and fingers rounding, until a human stands before Will.

Hannibal looks down at himself, surprise writ all over his face. After all, he told Will he'd been cursed since he was just a boy, so he has never known anything but a monster's form, and he'd clearly never dreamed of ever returning to human form.

"There," Will says, satisfied. "True love's kiss. Now we can take back the kingdom."

"Yours," Hannibal asks, "or mine?"

"Why," says Will, "ours. We made a Promise Vow to be married, didn't we?"

FINIS

Chapter End Notes

A/N: And then Hannibal and Will get married, and they take back first Will's kingdom and then Hannibal's, and they live happily ever after, crushing anyone who dares to cast aspersions on them because they're "just betas". Hannibal specifically likes to hold a grand feast after any of those occasions, with plentiful servings of people-pork.

Also, if anyone wants more Witcher fic (and stuff that's more faithful than my little ficlet), I'd HIGHLY recommend VictoriaSkyeMarsters's Witchers series. I had tons of fun with it before I even had an inkling as to what The Witcher was and it still was an amazing read, so I'm sure it's even better for people who actually know the lore. But if you are a clueless person like me, I'd still say go for it, the world is still explained pretty well.

Hint for Day 5: It involves that old fairytale trope of accidentally releasing a monster one stumbles upon in a hidden tower. Stay tuned for the reveal tomorrow (or later tonight, if I can make the words work for me)!

Mistletoe - Omega!Will & Beta!Hannibal

Chapter Summary

Three times did the King warn the Prince not to enter the Tower, and three times did the Prince disobey him. And on the third night, while the King was away, a mighty roar erupted from the Tower, for the Prince had released the Monster imprisoned inside, and by the time the King returned, the Monster had ridden away upon his nightmare stag, the Prince his hostage.

Chapter Notes

Warnings: minor canon character death (not Hannibal or Will)

Inspired by: The Death of Koschei the Deathless or Marya Morevna, because I was watching a myths of world thing and it sounded cool. Also inspired by Hannibal's lovely pose in the pig pen in S3.

Dynamics: Omega!Will & Beta!Hannibal

I chose to write this ficlet in a very stylized sort of nod to old fairytale, so if you're irritated by characters repeating themselves or dialogue/description repeating a lot . . . I do apologize but it is intentional, and I did very much lean into that and add a lot of it. Secondly, everyone is referred to by titles so:
- Prince = Will
- Monster = Hannibal
- King = Jack
- Queen = Bella

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Once upon a time, in a faraway land, a King laid a trap for a Monster of great renown. The Monster had preyed upon the King’s subjects for nearly ten years, stealing away women and men and leaving only their bodies behind, drained of blood and stripped of organs. Yet the clever King figured out a way to capture the monster, and he bid a trap built, and once the Monster was trapped, he bid a new Tower to be constructed. It would be built at the far end of the castle keep – within sight line, so that the King could maintain his watch so the Monster could not escape, yet removed enough that no one would accidentally stumble upon the Monster.

When it was done, the King installed the Monster into the Tower, bound and hobbled and collared like a pig for slaughter, and then he locked the door and put the one and only Key on a cord that he carried always around his neck, so that it could never be misplaced or stolen.

Long years passed, and although the people celebrated at first with each month when it became clear that the Monster's reign of terror had ended, soon the Monster began to fade from memory as other killers plagued the city. The King frequently rode out to administer justice, and his people loved him for it.

Thus, when it became clear that the Monster had cursed the King and Queen with the inability to conceive, the people rejoiced when the King and Queen announced they had adopted an omega child – small and sweet, with bright blue eyes and a riot of brown curls – to love as their own.

He was an odd child, to be sure, always staring a little too hard into people's eyes, always darting silently through the halls, always being able to see truly when most could not. Yet the people accepted him, for he was as the heir of their strong King and gentle Queen, and they indulged him in his stranger habits. After all, they told themselves, if he could see truly, was that a bad thing for a King? The King was the judge of the land, the ultimate protector, the sword and shield and crown.

When the child had not undergone more than five heats, the child asked the King about the Tower, a formidable yet crumbling structure, covered in ivy and cobwebs. Was there really a Monster trapped inside, the child wanted to know.

"Don't believe every rumor you hear," the King said, and ruffled his hair, and carried on, while the Queen eyed her husband uneasily.

When the child had not undergone more than eight heats, the child asked the King about the Tower again. Was there really a Monster trapped inside, the child wanted to know, a Monster who drained people dry of blood and feasted upon their organs?

"A King knows better than to listen to chattering fools and silly bards," the King said, and ruffled his hair, and carried on, while the Queen eyed her husband uneasily.

When the child had not undergone more than eleven heats, the child asked the King about the Tower again. Was there really a Monster trapped inside, the child wanted to know, a Monster who drained people dry of blood and feasted upon their organs and had vowed to one day break free and take the King and Queen's most precious and beloved possession as wergild?

This time, before the King could speak, the Queen laid one hand upon her King's arm, and looked into his eyes, and nodded, just once.

And the King sighed, for he had hoped to give the child a few more years of ignorance, and the King gestured to the child and led him to the highest balcony. There, the King pointed across the keep to the Tower, and he told the child, "Yes, there is a Monster imprisoned there. I bid him to be trapped there for his crimes, and I possess the only key. It will never hurt another member of our kingdom, and it cannot hurt you, and it will never break free."

The child was silent for a long moment, and then the child nodded, and the child said, “I already knew. I have heard the Monster. He sings sometimes, when the night is cold and the wolves howl and moon is full.”

And the King was very disturbed to here that, and he knelt before the child. “Do not listen to it,” the King warned. “The Monster possesses a strange power of compulsion, and to listen is to fall under his spell. Make no mistake: if it could, it would eat you alive, my son, for it cares not if its victims are alpha or beta or omega. Do not listen to it. Promise me.”

The child promised, as every good son does, and the Queen fashioned for the child a pair of cork plugs, to stopper his ears against the Monster’s songs.

Years passed, and the Tower crumbled even further, and the Monster passed out of song and into legend. The child grew into a Prince, tall and strong, and although his talents lay more in the writing arts than the warrior ones, this was not unusual for an omega, and the Prince was considered a fair and gentle judge, as fair as the King and as gentle as the Queen. The King grew older, and slower, and his hair turned whiter, but he remained steadfast and strong, and still he kept the Key upon a cord round his neck. But the Queen – the Queen grew weaker, and frailer, and with each winter, she could walk less and less.

Finally, one bitter and cold winter, the Queen went to sleep after a feast, claiming tiredness, and when the King returned to their chambers that night, the Queen had left this world and ventured into the next.

The King and the Prince mourned, and the castle mourned, and the kingdom mourned.

That night, the Prince fell asleep with his plugs of cork clutched in his hand to remember the loving hands of his mother-queen that had fashioned them for him, and that night, for the first time in years, the Prince heard the song of the Monster.

It was just as beautiful as it had been when he was a child, and yet the Prince could not make out the words any more than when he was a child. But he knew that the Monster knew of the Queen’s passing, and that the Monster sang in tribute to her gentleness.

But the Prince also remembered his promise to the King, and so he did not go to the Monster.

When the Queen died, it seemed she took a part of the King with her. He still remained stalwart and fair, but no longer was he gentle, for that part of him had died with his Queen. Soon the Prince and the King were bickering more than they were not, although the King usually heeded the wise words of his gentle Queen and went to his son each fortnight to make amends, for the Queen had warned that an omega might take the criticizing words of his alpha father too much to heart.

However, as more dust gathered upon the Queen’s crypt, the King found it harder and harder to take refuge in his dimming memories of the Queen. The Prince grew headstrong, as most young men are wont to become, and the King and the Prince soon were clashing more than they were agreeing. Soon the King’s habit of making amends fell to the wayside as the burdens of ruling, which had once been handled by the King and Queen, grew and fell entirely upon the shoulders of the aging King.

And then, one cold winter day, a terrified scream rent the air throughout the kingdom. A woman was found, naked and strung up over a lake, drained of blood and stripped of organs.

And the people remembered the legend of the Monster, and they whispered, and they cowered.

The King and Prince rode out, and the King showed all that he still possessed the Key to the Monster, and so the King and Prince set about trying to find out who or what was guilty of these terrible crimes.

Days passed, and then weeks, and more and more victims were found, drained of blood and stripped of organs, yet no culprit had been found and no Monster caught in the traps the King set out. The King and the Prince argued bitterly, for the King felt that it had to be a new Monster, perhaps the first Monster's heir or apprentice, but the Prince felt that it was a copycat, a human playing at being a monster.

"That is preposterous," said the King. "No human could do this. Clearly it is the work of a monster."

"Let me ask the Monster," said the Prince. "It is said he never lies. Let us ask him."

The King laughed, at first, and then upon realizing the Prince was serious, he grew angry. "The Monster may never lie, but that does not it will tell the truth. And even if it does, it may ask a price far greater than we can ever pay. We will be asking no questions of the Monster. Let it rot there, and let us find its heir so that they may rot together."

Yet more weeks passed, and so finally, one quiet night when the King had been called away to oversee a joust, a break from the brutal killings, the Prince slipped away. He took the knife and the needles the Queen had once used to fashion his cork plugs and sew his blankets, and he went to the Tower, and he scratched and poked and jiggled until the lock gave, for he had received furtive lessons in the stables from the kennel master on how to bypass locks and pick pockets.

The Tower was made up of only one room, at the very top, and a long winding staircase to reach it. The Prince shut the door behind him, and took a deep breath, and then he climbed, up and up and up, until he thought he must be higher than the mountains themselves. There was another door to the Monster's room, but no lock upon it, for the King had decreed that the chains upon the Monster were strong enough to hold him forever.

The Monster had keen hearing, of course, and so when the Prince pushed open the door, the Monster was ready.

"Hello," said the Monster, his face hidden by the darkness, for there was only one small window in the room. "Hello, princeling and truth-seeker. What is it that you seek from me?"

The Prince swallowed hard. "How do you know who I am?"

And the Monster laughed, shifting in the darkness. Chains clinked and rattled, but it was not the noisy cacophony that the Prince had expected. Rather, it sounded like the Monster was

held by only a few chains.

“I listen, sweet Prince,” said the Monster. “Do you think I sing merely to hear my own voice? No. I sing to the wind, and the wind sings back. And what delightful things it whispers in my ear.”

“The stories say you never lie.”

“What reason have I to lie? Lying is such a human thing. I am what I am, and I do what I do.”

“Then will you answer my question?”

“Perhaps,” the Monster said slyly. “But first you must tell me what the question is, for I may not know the answer.”

The Prince asked, “Who is attacking the people, in the same manner that you once did?”

“Ah. So direct. You do not believe it is my heir, then, striking out as in his nature? Or my apprentice, taking revenge for the slight against his master?”

“No,” said the Prince. “I have read the recordings of your crimes. You took joy in it, and you thought the victims were pigs, to be eaten and then transformed. This killer . . . he has no joy in him. He is confused. Do you know who it is?”

“I can guess.”

When the Monster said nothing else, the Prince frowned. “Who is it?”

“Oh, sweet Prince. I never said I would tell you who it was,” the Monster laughed.

The Prince shivered, but he did not flee. The King had raised him to be strong in the face of fear, and to consider his duty and service to his people as his most important responsibility. If the Monster knew the answer, then the Prince knew he must convince the Monster to tell him.

“What must I do for you to tell me the answer?”

“Ah ah ah, that is not how this game is played.”

“People are dying! This is not a game.”

“Life and death is a game, princeling. You would do well to learn that. Otherwise, how else will you enjoy life, if you do not realize that death is but one dice roll away from striking you down?” The Monster chuckled to himself, and then he said, “I propose a wager, then, if you truly want the answers I hold. I will trade you, what you want for what I want, and see if you are not clever enough to find the final answer without my assistance.”

“Deal,” said the Prince.

“Very well. You will give me one kiss, and I will give you one clue about this copycat.”

“That does not seem fair.”

“I get what I want, and you get what you want,” the Monster repeated. “Or would you rather I ask for something you cannot provide, like the Key to the Tower?”

“Very well. A kiss, then.”

And the Prince shivered in the darkness, for he had heard stories and songs and whispers as long as he lived about the Monster’s true form, so frightening to behold that a knight had dropped dead during the capture of the Monster. Yet he straightened his shoulders and strode forward, for he knew his duty, and what was one kiss compared to one life?

The Monster rose, and the chains rattled, and the Prince reached out and felt his face, stubble-covered and round like his own. The Monster waited patiently, and at last the Prince gathered his courage and kissed him.

The Monster’s lips were warm, just like the Prince’s own.

Something fell from the ceiling and hit the Prince upon his head, and when he leapt back, he frantically ran his fingers through his hair and came up not with a spider or insect, but a green pointed leaf.

The Monster sighed, as if submerged in a warm bath, and the Prince heard a muted rattling thump.

“A kiss for a secret,” the Monster mused. “Listen closely, little prince: the copycat does take joy in his kills. Look closely, and you will see.”

And the Prince thanked the Monster, and he fled down the steps, and he ensured that the door locked behind him as he departed. And the next day he rode out and looked with fresh eyes upon the latest victim, and saw that the Monster had spoken truly, for there was joy in the crime scene. However, it was just not human joy, but rather the all-consuming mindless joy of an animal.

Thus it was that the Prince understood that the killer was indeed a human, but a human who wished to be a Monster.

The next night, the Prince slipped away again, and he picked the lock upon the Tower, and he climbed up the long winding staircase, and he spoke again to the Monster.

“Hello, princeling and truth-seeker,” said the Monster. “Back so soon?”

“I know that the killer wishes to become a Monster like you,” said the Prince. “But I do not know how to find him. Please help me.”

“Hmm,” said the Monster. “If that is your wish.”

And so the Prince asked again what the Monster desired, and the Monster replied again that he desired only a kiss, and the Prince again leaned forward and kissed the Monster, marveling at the warmth so similar to the Prince’s own.

There was another muted rattling thump, louder than the last, and the Monster sighed again, pleased.

“A kiss for a secret,” the Monster mused. “Listen closely, little prince: the copycat has already fashioned himself a path to becoming a Monster. Look closely, and you will see.”

And the Prince thanked the Monster, and he fled down the steps, and he ensured that the door locked behind him as he departed. And the next day he rode out and looked with fresh eyes upon the latest victim, and saw that the Monster had spoken truly, for the wounds upon the victim were strange and jagged and large, and he realized that the human – lacking the inhuman form of a Monster – must have fashioned a Monster suit for himself.

The Prince bid his servants and spies to listen for him, and soon they returned with news: a hunter, one as wild as a wolf and cantankerous as a bear, who trapped many animals and sold their furs but never their bones.

The next night, the Prince slipped away again, and he picked the lock upon the Tower, and he climbed up the long winding staircase, and he spoke again to the Monster.

“Hello, princeling and truth-seeker,” said the Monster. “Back so soon?”

“I know that the killer has fashioned a suit in the likeness of a Monster like you,” said the Prince. “But I do not know if it is the man I have found. Please help me.”

“Why are you unsure? If he is innocent, no harm shall be done to him; he can be released when the killings cease.”

“I want to know if I am right,” insisted the Prince.

“Ah,” said the Monster. “So you wish to know if you see truly, rather than if you might condemn an innocent man to the gallows. A fine desire. I can help you, if that is your wish.”

And so the Prince asked again what the Monster desired, and the Monster replied again that he desired only a kiss, and the Prince again leaned forward and kissed the Monster, marveling at the warmth so similar to the Prince’s own.

There was another muted rattling thump, this one the loudest of them all, and the Monster sighed again, pleased.

“A kiss for a secret,” the Monster mused. “Listen closely, little prince: the copycat has abandoned his human name, but you will find it writ in the ledgers of the court, for he used to sharpen his teeth on cattle and sheep and dogs before he turned to humans.”

And the Prince thanked the Monster, and he fled down the steps, and he ensured that the door locked behind him as he departed. And the next day he rose and looked at the ledgers of the court, and saw that the Monster had spoken truly, for the man the Prince’s spies had whispered about, Randall Tier, was indeed included for stealing and mauling livestock.

The Prince bid his guards to capture the man, but by the time they reached the house in the woods where the man dwelt, the man was gone. So the Prince and his guards made camp,

waiting for the man to emerge, and they waited.

But the man was clever, for he struck in the night, when the moon hid behind the clouds and the fire burnt low, and killed three of the guards while the Prince slumbered. The Prince awoke when the man came crashing through the shelter to land on top of him, snarling and savage, and the man the Prince wrestled and punched and fought, until at last the Prince rolled himself on top and struck the man in the jack, snapping the man's Monster bone-cage suit. He struck and he struck and he struck, until the man whined piteously underneath his fists. And then, panting and bloody and filled with righteous anger, the Prince reached into the bone-cage suit, and he grasped the man's neck, and he twisted, sharp and quick and furious, until the man's neck gave with a brutal snap. And the Prince felt victorious.

The Prince took the dead man back to the castle, declaring that the kingdom was once again safe, and the people cheered.

That night, the Prince heard the song of the Monster again, and when he awakened, he found the Monster sitting at the edge of his bed. Yet he felt no fear, because he knew the Monster meant him no harm. In fact, he knew the Monster felt quite the opposite about him.

"Have you come to steal me away?" asked the Prince.

The Monster inclined his head. His antlers cast a fearsome shadow upon the ground, as dark as his black-as-night skin, and when he stood he was taller than any man the Prince had ever known. "Are you going to scream, my sweet Prince, or are you going to come willingly?"

The Prince looked down at his hands. He had scrubbed them clean of the blood and changed his clothes, yet still he felt the sensation of utter power coursing in his veins when he remembered the way the dead man's neck had snapped. And he knew that he too was a Monster inside, except he retained the human skin the Monster had somehow shed.

"Why would I scream?" said the Prince. "I am just like you, but while you lie by omitting the truth as it serves you, I lie with my human face."

"A beautiful human face," agreed the Monster, "but hardly a lie. Monsters come in all shapes and sizes, my Prince. Some look like me. Some look like you. And some cannot be seen at all."

"Perhaps it is better, if you are to steal me away," said the Prince. "Then my kingdom will not be ravaged by a third Monster."

"You may tell lies to yourself if you wish," said the Monster. "But we both know the truth."

"And what is the truth, my Monster?"

And the Monster leaned down, and kissed the Prince on the lips, and whispered, "The truth is that you desire most of all to come with me, for I can impart to you knowledge that you do not even know you lack, and I can show you sights you can hardly dream of, and I can be a mate to care for you until the end of time itself, for although I am a beta, I will be a mate to rival all the alphas who ever vied for your hand."

Moments later, the entire castle woke to the sound of a terrified scream that rent the air throughout the kingdom. Servants and lords and peasants alike rushed outside, only to cower at the sight and the sound of the Monster riding his nightmare stag of a steed through the streets, laughing in delight, the Prince his hostage as he galloped into the night.

Thus it was that King returned to a kingdom in chaos, with one Monster dead and another freed, and the Prince long since gone.

And the King knew then that the Monster's final words to him had come true, for when he had overseen the Monster bound and hobbled and collared like a pig for slaughter, the Monster had smiled and laughed and told him that one day it would the Monster who would stand triumphant, who would see the King's sorrows multiplied unending, who would take from the King his most precious and beloved possessions as wergild.

The King ordered a search, of course. He even rode out himself, following the trail of the Monster's nightmare stag through the swamps and plains and forests. Yet although he searched for years and years and years, he never found the Prince or the Monster.

When he died, childless and heirless, the kingdom descended into chaos. Lords turned on each other for a chance to sit on the throne, and fires raged through the countryside, and soon even the tale of the Monster and the stolen Prince faded into distant memory, for the people had little cause to devote time to retelling old horrors when new horrors like famine and pestilence and war swept throughout the kingdom. The castle was abandoned, plundered of its riches, and time and fires and fighting soon left only one Tower still standing, covered in ivy and cobwebs, and possessing only three stems of mistletoe, as perfect as the day they had been used to cage a Monster.

Slowly but surely, the forest at the edge of the kingdom crept closer and closer, swallowing up homes and reclaiming farmland, until at last, centuries later, the kingdom was nothing but one great forest.

When the trees at last reached the Tower, the last human vestige of the old kingdom, the King and Queen of the Forest emerged to contemplate it.

"Your father did well to order this built," said the King of the Forest. "It has stood well against the test of time."

The Queen of the Forest agreed. "It was blessed with strong enchantments. Look; I can still see the mistletoe that once held you fast for years."

"Indeed," said the King of the Forest. "For mistletoe cannot be destroyed, not even by time. There is only one way to break its chains."

And the Queen of the Forest laughed. "Would you have me kiss it, then, to banish it from our kingdom for good?"

"No," said the King of the Forest. "Let it grow here, as a monument to a time when humans thought they might be able to hold me against my will. Besides, it can do no harm to me so long as you still desire a place with me, my sweet Prince."

“You once swore to be a mate to me that would rival all the alphas who ever vied for my hand. You have kept that promise, so why would I ever desire to be anywhere but with you?”

“Ah, but I can never truly predict you.”

“A Monster never lies,” said the Queen of the Forest. “Would you say I am not a Monster?’

“Why, my sweet Prince,” said the King of the Forest, kissing his beloved Queen, laughing exactly as he had when he stole his Prince away in the dead of night, “I would say you are the best Monster of us all.”

FINIS

Chapter End Notes

A/N: And then Hannibal and Will rule over the forest forevermore as King and Queen, the forest slowly retaking everything and returning the human structures to nature.

Also, in case you're wondering, yes I have written another monster fic based on a mistletoe prompt before, and you can find that as Day 18 of my HanniHolidays 2016 Ficlet Collection. And I've never written in this style before, so I'm curious if it was good; leave me a comment telling me if I should do it again or never go near it in a million years lol.

Hint for Day 6: It involves reincarnation. Stay tuned for the reveal tomorrow!

True Mates - Omega!Will & Omega!Hannibal

Chapter Summary

Hannibal Lecter has his life routine down perfectly: he sees patients as a psychiatrist, he cooks all of his own food, and most importantly, he kills and eats every true mate Mother Nature sees fit to send his way. After all, he knows there's no way anyone could be his equal, even if their scent says they're his true mate. Enter Will Graham.

Chapter Notes

Warnings: slightly more graphic description of Hanni murdering than I normally do & noncon groping of the Hanni booty

Inspired by: I was thinking of that soulmate reincarnation trope and how cute it was, and then I was like "lol wouldn't it be funny if Hannibal just kept murdering all of his soulmates and then met Will and was like F**K HE'S TOO CUTE TO KILL". Aaand here we are.

Dynamics: Omega!Will & Omega!Hannibal

See the end of the chapter for more notes

On that fateful day when Hannibal's heat sent his life spiraling off course – the day his heat distracted his parents, allowing them to be killed, and the day his heat distracted him, allowing his Mischa to be taken – Hannibal makes a vow to himself to never let his biology control him again. He trains himself rigorously, packing on the muscle and undergoing training to make his body a weapon against any alpha who would seek to control him. He exposes himself to stimuli – the scent of an alpha's rut, the timbre of an alpha's voice, the taste of an alpha's blood – until he can resist any alpha, and goes even further until his instinctive reaction is to challenge and kill rather than withdraw and submit. Finally, and most importantly, he hones his habit of seeking and killing his true mates.

After all, everyone ceases to age after turning thirty five, and they only continue aging after bonding with their true mates. Hannibal does not have the time or patience to throw his finely tuned body carelessly into the jaws of white hairs and withered muscles and dimming senses, and for a brute of an alpha, no less.

His first true mate he meets in the opera. The alpha has slicked back hair and a donkey's bray of a laugh, and when Hannibal shakes hands with him, he feels the telltale sign of his heart beating double-time in recognition of a man whose scent says that he is Hannibal's perfect

match. The man notices too, and his polite smile twists into a leer as his other hand strays from Hannibal's waist to his buttocks. Hannibal pushes the hand away; the man returns it, grabbing and squeezing, eyes dilating as he inhales Hannibal's scent.

Hannibal promises to call him the next day, drags into him into his basement that night, and then flays him alive to make crispy fried skin.

His second true mate he meets in the butcher's. She's a beautiful alpha, all windswept cheeks and bright sparkling eyes, and when Hannibal holds the door open for her, he sees the way she does a double take as she takes in his scent and realizes what it means. When they exchange numbers, she texts him twenty times in a single minute, and that night calls demanding to know why he hasn't arrived at her house so they can get to know each other. When Hannibal demurs, she attempts to compel him using her voice.

Hannibal promises to come visit first thing the next morning, drags her into his basement that night, and then cuts out her tongue to marinate and enjoy.

His third true mate he meets at the hospital. He's a beta, meek and mild, and he stutters charmingly when introducing himself. He offers to bring wine and meats to Hannibal's for dinner, and Hannibal, on a whim, decides to accept. Unfortunately, the man also takes it upon himself to imbibe a rather large amount of wine beforehand to steady his nerves, and after the second dropped plate, Hannibal is rather done with the man.

Hannibal promises to walk the staggering man to his car, drags him into his basement that night, and then practices removing fingers and toes without allowing the pig to become unconscious.

The rest of his mates begin to blur together, after that. Mother Nature is clearly frustrated, as Hannibal begins to meet his true mates within five years or less after he rids himself of the old one, and they are all of genders and designations. Hannibal even meets an omega, once, sweet and shy, but she is in love with another alpha, and when she pleads for Hannibal to not say a word and to let her go, he agrees.

She is the only mate Hannibal does not kill.

That being said, she is also the only exception, so Hannibal has the routine down fairly perfectly. He builds a life for himself, plays on the sympathies of being a man much older than he looks who has not yet found his true mate, and once he finds his true mate, he turns them into a beautiful new tableau. Sometimes he even makes a tableau just for the joy of it.

This is why, when Hannibal meets a headstrong young man whose scent makes the beast inside of Hannibal stir, he doesn't even bother to sniff out whether the man is an alpha, because the last four have been. He simply smiles and gets his name and then drags the man into his basement that very night. He strips the man, ties him to his table, binding him firmly at the ankles, knees, hips, wrists, shoulders, and head, and then he dons his protective plastic suit and lays out his tools and begins to sketch a new tableau as he waits for his true mate to awaken.

The man starts groaning ten minutes after the drugs wear off. Hannibal smiles, flips his sketchbook closed, and then stands to fetch his favorite scalpel.

He is expecting his true mate to scream or to weep or to beg.

He is not expecting his true mate to say, “Hey, could you make this one quick? You must have satisfied every imaginable method of killing me by now.”

Hannibal pauses. “I do not leave victims alive.”

The restraints squeak and groan behind him; his mate, testing the give on his cuffs and finding them quite strong. They are made, after all, to hold even an alpha powered by rut; they can hold anyone.

“I know you don’t.” His mate lets his head thud against the table. “You’re Hannibal Lecter, Il Mostro of Italy and the Chesapeake Ripper of Virginia, and you started killing a long, long time ago. You probably have killed more people than the most prolific serial killers put together. And you’ve killed me at least 30 times, so can we get this over with? I hate the part when you start monologuing about god and destiny.”

Hannibal has to turn around at that point. His memory has been excellent, because even though Hannibal hasn’t thought much of his true mates, he always makes room for a portrait in one of his shadowed halls, yet when Hannibal comes this young man to all of the portraits in his hall, he finds not a single match. Certainly, the young man shares some traits with other mates – the curls of his sixth, the bright blue eyes of his ninth, the height of his fifteenth – but he is singular and unique and different, and when Hannibal closes his eyes and inhales, the young man’s scent – sharp lemon curd and rich dark chocolate and sweet cinnamon – is like no other as well.

Hannibal opens his eyes. Perhaps the young man is merely observant. “How long have you known?” he asks, curious. It is unfortunate the young man knows so much, but maybe also fortunate, for Hannibal can eliminate both a true mate and dangerous weakness.

“All my life,” the young man says. “I dreamed of you, as a child. When I saw your tableaus in the news, I knew.”

It’s not unheard of for true mates to dream of each other, of course. There are many testimonials of alphas and betas and omegas who have danced in a meadow in their sleep, and upon venturing into the meadow by day, have stumbled upon their mate. Or who have dreamed of a vacation in a faraway country, only to seize the opportunity and run into their mate there.

Hannibal has never experienced it. He sleeps lightly and shortly, and rarely dreams of anything besides a pitch blackness darkness, and the screams of a child in the winter.

“And what did you think you dreamed?” Hannibal says, playing along.

The young man smiles. “You, in your fine gentleman’s suit, a golden ring upon one hand and a wing glass in the other, attending operas by day and feasting upon your suitors at night.”

“A vivid imagination,” Hannibal allows. After all, he can’t say that he’s never done that. He probably has. But it’s far too vague a description for him to know that this was a true mate dream and not simply the whimsy of a child who watched murder scenes on the news. “But not terribly convincing.”

“If I was truly using my imagination, you’d know,” the young man drawls. “Very well. The last time you let me live, I wore a blue frock and brown sandals and a red bow to tie back my hair. You wore a red and black suit, and ate an entire sandwich before you answered me, and departed from the restaurant in a Bentley. Does that ring any bells?”

And, well. Hannibal had asked for specifics.

Hannibal wanders the halls of his mind palace again, seeking the memory of the one omega he’d let escape his wrath, and when he steps into the memory, as fresh and still as it was the day he had captured it, he finds an omega with a blue frock and brown sandals and a red bow to tie back her hair. She smells of fresh lemons and mint cocoa, and she begs him to allow her to marry her lover, and she lingers for only a second when he walks to his Bentley before running home.

Still, Hannibal would be foolish to accept his words at face value, even ones that happened to be true. Hannibal did let the woman live; perhaps she told someone.

“It may,” Hannibal says noncommittally. “Was that your only dream?”

“Hannibal Lecter, you have literally cut off my tongue, boiled me alive, broken every bone in my foot, roasted me, and strung me up with fish hooks,” the young man says. “Hell no was that my only dream about you.”

Hannibal switches tracks. The young man’s scent is thick and angry, and appealing as it smells, the longer Hannibal inhales it the more likely it will send him into heat, and if he goes into heat, he is likely to forget reason and bond with the man anyways, for he has never had the cause to experience heat since that first time and thus never quite learned to conquer it.

“When did we first meet?”

“At an opera. You looked really hot. But you were also weirdly against any form of rudeness. I was curious how far you’d let me push.”

“When did we last meet?”

“Eh, we didn’t meet so much as you sniffed me out across the street like a weirdo and then drove a dent in my skull with a tire iron. That really hurt, by the way.”

“What do you remember of our meeting at a swimming pool?”

“Nothing, because we didn’t meet at a swimming pool. We met at the dance school next to the swimming pool. You rather liked my skin tight uniform, as I recall, but you still strangled me with a belt that night.”

“What was I wearing when we met on the plane?”

“The funniest goddamn fur hat I’ve ever seen, and yes, I know, you told me it was called an ushanka and that it was very warm, but it did not match your jacket at all.”

“What were you wearing when we met at the cemetery?”

“Uh, nothing. I was streaking because my friend dared me. Then you drowned me in a lake. And stole my clothes! Rude.”

Hannibal opens his mouth and finds that no more words come out. He finds himself abruptly flummoxed, because perhaps someone could have dug deep enough and guessed enough to know some of these answers, but all of them? That is statistically unlikely. On top of that, some of these incidents happened with no witnesses, and so long ago that there is no way it would be recorded by any devices.

“What, are we done with twenty questions? Can we get on with the killing then?”

“You . . . wish for me to kill you.”

“Well, I doubt you brought me down here to dance for me,” the young man says sarcastically. “You’ve literally killed me within 12 hours or less after meeting me, and you’re a creature of habit. Why stop now?”

Because you are interesting, Hannibal thinks, and very nearly says.

The young man doesn’t seem to notice, or is simply too far into his clearly rehearsed speech to stop now. He blithely continues, “I’ve even made it easy for you! My mother never knew me, my father hasn’t spoken to me in years, I live alone, I have one friend and he can’t talk because humans don’t understand barking, and my job is a dead end part-time gig that no one will even miss me at because my shifts are always erratic. And we’ve never met in this lifetime, so there’s no connection between us. Chop chop, Doctor, this table is very cold.”

“Or maybe you’re just a loner, who finds socialization too uncomfortable and so recluses himself for self-comfort.”

The young man sighs. “I always forget you try to psychoanalyze me. Please don’t. You won’t like me when I’m psychoanalyzed.”

“I am a psychiatrist.”

“Yeah, and it was a terrible day for us both when you got your certification,” the young man says mournfully. “You celebrated by making cake with my blood. And you didn’t even let me have some, you just lit the candles and then slit my throat.”

“How rude of me.”

“No, it’s rude of you to leave me naked and shivering. Just get it over it, thanks.”

So Hannibal picks up his knife and walks towards his true mate, and his true mate leans back and closes his eyes and bares his throat, and Hannibal sets the blade against his neck and pushes and watches the first line of blood well up. His true mate doesn’t even twitch; either

he has excellent control or very high pain tolerance. But Hannibal doesn't have long to think about that, because his next inhale brings in the scent of his true mate's blood, and well.

Lemons and chocolate and cinnamon, and it is divine.

But most importantly, the faint undertones of slick and heat and *omega*.

Hannibal leans back. "You're an omega."

"Yeah . . . And?"

"Mother Nature has not seen fit to send an omega my way in years," Hannibal remarks. "Our cycles could sync, but you could never control me."

"Not with my voice," the young man agrees cautiously. "Only an alpha can do that. But I couldn't control you as a beta either, and you still struck me down whenever I came to you as a beta."

"That is not the same. A beta may control an omega simply by not being brought down by the lows of heat. They retain their mind, and can do whatever they like."

"You think heat, what, turns you into a feral mindless animal?"

"You think it isn't?"

"I know it isn't. You sent me into heat, you know. When you let me go. I was dehydrated and starving and gross when it was done, but I remembered every second of it." The young man pauses. "You were a doctor, didn't you study omega heats? I mean, an omega in heat isn't really in a fit state to give consent or sign legal documents, but they can think and reason. Or did you think you were the exception?"

For anyone else, Hannibal might have killed them for asking such an impertinent question alone, but his true mate's voice is clear and simple, no judgment and no aspersions. Simply curiosity. And how can Hannibal call curiosity rude when he himself has let his mate live out of curiosity?

"I do not remember reason," Hannibal admits, pulling the blade away. He has to force himself not to lick the blood off the blade and find out if it tastes as delicious as it smells. "I remember madness and grief and terror, and nothing more."

"Every first heat is traumatic," the young man says. "But so is every first step, first jump, first kiss. You get better at it."

"And have you kissed so many people?"

"Okay, bad metaphor, fair enough. I haven't kissed anyone."

"Why not?"

“Because I’m so kissable?” the young man says, tone radiating skepticism like a stove radiates heat.

Hannibal looks his true mate up and down. He has strong thighs and lovely abs and plush lips. “You are indeed.”

“ . . . Right. But no, I haven’t kissed anyone. Kinda seemed pointless when my true mate was just going to off me the second he found me. I thought I should save the energy for other pursuits.”

“Perhaps we should remedy that, then.”

“Uh . . . why?’

“I find myself curious,” Hannibal says simply.

Kissing his true mate is indeed quite a pleasurable experience. He is very kissable, with soft lips that part against Hannibal’s and a scent so divine Hannibal wants to bottle him up and never let him leave, and in his mind he thinks it a tragedy to never experience such a thing again. To never smell his true mate again, to never spar with words on the battlefield of their minds, to never plunder the depths of his lips.

And just like that, Hannibal knows he cannot kill his true mate.

Hannibal steps back and walks over to the table to lay down his knife. “What kind of cake do you like?”

“I am not giving you any ideas on how to cook me, you can come up with that on your own.”

“For you to eat, not me.”

“. . . Chocolate. Why?”

Hannibal smiles. He strips off his protective plastic suit and fetches a blanket, and then he begins to release the restraints upon his true mate. His mate grabs the blanket, hurriedly warming himself underneath it, and then huddles on the table, staring suspiciously at Hannibal like a chick watches a fox.

“Well, it was rude of me not to let you have any cake. And we’ve already tasted your blood. I think it’s high time I return the favor and let you taste mine.”

“That’s . . . new.”

Hannibal rummages through the pile of clothes. He had intended to burn them, as standard, but he’d kept them on a whim, one he now is grateful for. There’s a wallet in a deep inner pocket, and when Hannibal flips it open he finds a driver’s license for one William Shannon Graham, with Will staring straight into the camera as if to reach through the lens and grab Hannibal by the heart and change everything that he is simply by existing.

“Well, Will Graham,” Hannibal says, “I imagine you’re quite hungry. Let me cook dinner for you.”

“You are so weird,” Will complains. “Why did I have to have a weirdo as my true mate.”

He still follows Hannibal upstairs though, still sits at his table, still eats the cake Hannibal makes. He even compliments the taste.

Hannibal finds his first white hair thirty years after he lets Will live. He looks at it for a few moments, considering, and then when Will calls to him, he brushes it off of his collar, strips off his shirt, and steps out into the bedroom, for he has better things to do than ponder his advancing age.

Things like kissing his true mate, for example.

“What was that for?” Will laughs, eyes twinkling as he presses close and slips his hands around Hannibal’s waist to pull him back into the nest of blankets and pillows on their bed. “I just saw you five minutes ago.”

“And I missed you terribly in those five minutes. It was almost unbearable.”

“Drama queen. Come on, get comfortable – your heat will start soon, and we need all the rest we can get before that.”

FINIS

Chapter End Notes

A/N: And Hannibal and Will continue to share their heats with each other, and when they die, they both get reincarnated with their memories intact and find each other and continue living together.

Hint for Day 7: It involves my all-time favorite different first meeting trope. Stay tuned for the reveal tomorrow!

Role Reversal - Omega!Will & Omega!Hannibal

Chapter Summary

When FBI Agent Hannibal Lecter wakes up after emergency surgery, he meets the doctor who saved his life, an omega named Dr. Will Graham. He expects Dr. Graham to agree to his request for discharge. He does not expect Dr. Graham to get up in his business and smell him.

Chapter Notes

Warnings: noncon attempted surgery (think the kidney ambulance guy) and bloody description of said surgery plus discussion of discrimination against omegas in alpha-dominated workplaces

Inspired by: I was rewatching the kidney ambulance guy episode (and yes I do refer to many of the episodes in my head as whatever killer it was, so like mushroom garden guy and kidney ambulance guy) and in particular the moment when Hanni jumps in the ambulance to save that victim. And I just wondered, for a second, what if it was Hannibal passed out under the knife and Will jumping in to save him? And tada here we are. (Not exactly but ya know what I mean)

Dynamics: Omega!Will & Omega!Hannibal

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Hannibal wakes up in a place that is definitely not his home or his office or his car, three thoughts go through his mind. Firstly and most importantly is that his plan was clearly a rousing success, as the perpetrator who has been going around removing kidneys so badly has taken the bait. Secondly, he is not restrained in any way, although he can tell that drugs to render him sedate are still circulating in his system, which means he has to be careful. Thirdly, he needs to find a way to contact Jack and the team, or at the very least emergency medical services, because he's seen what happens after the surgery concludes and so far the conclusion has been one comatose victim and four dead ones.

Footsteps approach from his left, but they are quick and nervous, which just sums up his entire modus operandi, really – quick and nervous and sloppy, resulting in so many unneeded deaths.

Hannibal breathes regularly and deeply, keeping his eyes closed and his heart rate low, so that the perpetrator doesn't notice anything amiss. He can hear the faint static of a radio, muffled

as if through a wall, and the purr of an engine. That, coupled with the smell of metal and antiseptic, tells Hannibal he is in an ambulance, laid out on a stretcher for this man to steal one of his kidneys for a quick buck.

It's offensive on principle, really. If this man wanted to make a quick buck, there are easier ways to do it than stealing kidneys, and more importantly, he's just ruining good meat.

There's a metallic shuffling and clinking, presumably the perpetrator trying to select the tools which with to commit his crime. Hannibal shifts, ever so slightly, and tugs discretely at the IV to dislodge it. It will cause a slight discomfort as the fluids build up under his skin, but it will also ensure that Hannibal has a clear mind, so it is worth the discomfort.

Gloved hands skim against Hannibal's torso, checking and pressing, and then Hannibal feels the sticky silkiness of gloved hands as they pull up his shirt. With his mind growing clearer with every second, Hannibal begins plotting various ways to turn the tables. He honestly could do it now – flip himself upright and wrap his arms around the perpetrator and choke him out, but then they could only charge him for kidnapping and further digging would be required to tie him firmly to the deaths if he does not confess. He strikes Hannibal as the kind of man who would confess, but Hannibal grew bored of his case two victims ago and so he decides to wait to ensure a more airtight conviction.

Pain blooms along his side as the knife parts skin, and Hannibal inhales deeply. He's had worse, but the sting is all the greater for the indignity, and the fact that it will likely scar. Hannibal prefers to only collect scars from worthwhile opponents.

There's a clatter as the perpetrator puts the knife back down and then his cold gloved hands return, probing gingerly at the wound. In a few moments, he will reach inside and attempt to begin seeking the kidney, and then he will return with the implements for surgery, and once he is down, he will clumsily suture the wound, and then Hannibal will likely bleed out because he is a moron.

The second Hannibal hears the man inhale to settle himself before beginning, Hannibal decides that he has more than enough proof.

The man has approximately one second to wonder why Hannibal's heart rate is suddenly rising before Hannibal rolls over, clocks the man in the face with his elbow and then, while the man is staggering backwards, distracted and dazed and alarmed, Hannibal hops off the stretcher, puts him in a chokehold, and counts backwards from ten.

The man struggles like a yowling cat at two, begins to slump at five, and is down for the count at 8. Hannibal holds for two more seconds, just to be sure, and then drops him.

Then he rummages in his pocket for his phone and calls Jack.

"WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU LECTER?" Jack booms.

Hannibal sighs. Sometimes it's fun to run circles around the FBI, using their resources to sniff out future students or prey upon lesser beings or simply basking in Jack's utter

frustration at not catching the Ripper. Other times, well. Other times, he truly is tempted to burn the whole thing down, just so he can feast upon Jack's rude and very loud mouth.

"I have found the man who has been killing people for their kidneys," Hannibal says. "I am sending you my location; please bring back up. Also bring a proper EMT, as I fear I am in need of medical assistance. Thank you."

The sound Jack makes in responsible is almost entirely why Hannibal considers it worth it to keep Jack alive.

The killer might have been absolutely terrible at actually extracting kidneys properly, but he was excellent at opening a wide wound in Hannibal's side, so blood loss becomes an actual concern. When Jack, the FBI back-up, and the EMTs arrive, Hannibal points to the killer and then lets the EMTs help him onto another stretcher and begin the process of putting pressure and assessing the damage. He also lets them chase off Jack before bringing him into the ambulance to be transported to the hospital.

After that, Hannibal's mind starts to drift, a combination of the low quality drugs and the significant blood loss. He hears snippets of words, from his name to discussions of his injuries to nonverbal grunts as the nurses in the emergency room struggle to pull off his clothing for surgery.

Finally, a masked face pops into Hannibal's line of view. The person is covered head to tie in surgical scrubs, so all Hannibal can truly make out are the eyes, but thankfully they speak loudly and clearly.

"Alright, Agent Lecter," the surgeon says, "we're going to move you into the theater soon to being suturing your wound and repairing the damage. Just close your eyes and relax . . ."

The man has a very nice Louisiana drawl, and that's the last thing Hannibal notes before he passes out.

Hannibal is well aware that it isn't typical for a surgeon to return after surgery and evaluate the patient, but he's also well aware that he has exasperated five nurses, two residents, and three attending physicians with his quite reasonable and polite requests to be discharged, so he imagines that right now they're just sending in anyone who they think might be able to talk him out of leaving.

"Come in," Hannibal says when he hears a sharp tap-tap. "Ah, good morning, Doctor."

"Morning. You're Agent Hannibal Lecter, right?"

"Correct."

They go through the standard dance of verifying his name, date of birth, and potential allergies, and then the doctor – who, it turns out, was hiding a very nice head of curls under

his cap and has a clean shaven chin to match his Louisiana accent – leans against the wall, crosses his arms, and bluntly says, “You seriously want to leave already?”

Hannibal pushes down the urge to sigh. He’s answered this question at least seven times, and there’s a limit even to his patience. “Yes. I have received more than enough transfusions and fluids to replace what I have lost. Your surgery was a success, as I have retained both my life and my kidney. And your suturing is to be commended; I do not believe it will even scar too badly.”

The doctor raises an eyebrow. “Were you a doctor in a past life or something?”

“Nothing so grandiose. I double majored in biology as well as criminology and forensic science.”

“Still doesn’t make you qualified enough to judge that you’re stable for discharge. Which, by the way, you’re not. You need at least another night in observation so that we know you’re not going to go into cardiac arrest just by showering.”

“I promise you, I’m well aware of my limitations. I have even closed to the case, so I am free to spend the next several days resting up.”

“I’m sure you are,” the doctor says, his tone smooth and patient. “But I’m still not discharging you when you live alone and have no one to call for help if you collapse or start bleeding again.”

Hannibal pauses. Normally, he would have classed the doctor’s tone as attempting to handle Hannibal, but Hannibal – well aware of the intricacies and bureaucracy of emergency rooms – had insinuated that he had a roommate willing to look after him. It hadn’t worked to convince the last attending, but certainly no one had realized it was a lie, and Hannibal hadn’t bothered to correct the narrative once he realized they were just going to keep throwing doctors at him to convince him not to leave.

“What makes you think I live alone?”

The doctor taps the side of his nose. “You’ve got high quality deodorant on, but I’ve got a very good nose. By my guess, you haven’t even had a heat within the last ten or so years due to suppressants. And, sure, perhaps you could have a partner and simply didn’t want to share a heat with them; no judging, some people don’t. But there’s no way you could live with anyone for an extended period of time without some of their scent rubbing off on your clothing.”

Hannibal blinks. “Did you just . . . smell me?”

“Difficult to avoid when I had my hands inside you trying to save your life. Which you are now actively trying to undo. I spent a lot of time fixing you, and I’d prefer to not have to redo all of that.”

“Interesting,” Hannibal comments. “Most attempted to dissuade me by invoking my sense of responsibility.”

“You’re an omega who has successfully foregone a heat without ten years and haven’t gone into toxic shock. That means that you’ve got the mental control to be able to juggle all the necessary suppressants and their different timings without letting any of the doses get too high or overlap on top of doing your job as an FBI agent. You’re responsible.”

“Perhaps I have a very efficient alpha.”

“Friend? Sure. A very nice lady named Alana dropped by. But partner? Nope.”

Hannibal inhales. This doctor isn’t the only one with a keen sense of smell, after all, and Hannibal never likes to know less when he can know more. A lot more puzzle pieces click into place when Hannibal scents the tell-tale fresh cut grass notes of the highest grade suppressant – the one Hannibal switches off with a lesser grade one to avoid toxic shock.

“You are also an omega.”

“Yep,” the doctor says, not even seeing the slightest bit bothered by Hannibal sniffing all up in his business. “Name’s Will Graham. Louisiana born and bred. I nearly went into forensics, actually.”

“With a nose like that, you would have been an asset.”

Dr. Graham snorts. “Not with my gender. You know as well as I do that the FBI has historically turned away omegas, and the few who do get in are usually put on desk jobs or pushed out soon after. Besides, I was short on cash once and took a night shift at an ER so I could still attend classes. My first night there was a stabbing – some hunter who cussed out everybody in range. I got to peek at the surgery and I was hooked.” He pauses. “Although, only a week later, the guy was dead because the Ripper poked holes in him from head to toe. All of that work, hours and hours in surgery, a complete waste. So. Let’s not repeat that, okay?”

Hannibal also vividly remembers a really rude hunter. He made an excellent canvas upon which to replicate the Wound Man.

But before he can try and formulate a response to that, the door flies open and Jack stomps in. He has his typical grumpy expression on, further compounded by his acrid irritated alpha scent. Dr. Graham straightens immediately, and Hannibal gets a lovely first row seat to how the doctor greets Jack with his head held high and a set expression, already ready to defy the alpha if necessary as opposed to backing away in submission as all omegas are taught to. He wonders, briefly, if this is how he looks when he faces down Jack.

“Is he ready to leave yet? I’ve got the press howling outside for blood and he needs to fill out enough reports to make a forest,” Jack snaps.

Hannibal isn’t exactly eager to complete said paperwork, but it has to be done eventually, and he’d prefer to tackling insipid paperwork at home than remain languishing here. So he sits up and opens his mouth to agree.

But Dr. Graham cuts him off. “He isn’t stable for discharge,” Dr. Graham says flatly.

Jack points at Hannibal. “He’s my best agent! I need him out there to determine if this guy is the Ripper or not.”

“No, you don’t. Firstly, if you let him out there, he’ll be your best agent for perhaps two more hours, tops, before he’s back in my ER even worse off than before. And secondly, anyone with eyeballs can see this wasn’t the Ripper. I mean, you did see the wound, right? The Ripper takes pride in his work and he makes what he considers art. This guy failed at a basic paint the numbers, the wound was so sloppy. It’s not him.”

Jack glowers. “I let you do your job, doctor, and you let me do mine. I’m the FBI agent here.”

Dr. Graham remains unmoved. “And it’s within my job to do what is best for my patient. So. No. He isn’t stable for discharge. He can maybe give a written statement if he stops trying to get out of bed.”

Hannibal pauses with one leg midair off the bed, and then slowly pulls it back under the blankets. He no longer finds that he minds staying quite so much; clearly, Dr. Graham has a very interesting mind to go with his interesting nose. Hannibal always delights in picking the brains of those who try to see the ripper. After all, that’s why he decided to become the lead agent on the Ripper case in the FBI.

Jack continues to grumble under his breath, but Dr. Graham stands tall and unflinching, so Hannibal is treated to the wonderful sight of Jack giving in and turning to leave with his tail tucked between his legs. It is beautiful.

“Are you truly going to let me give a written statement?” Hannibal asks curiously.

“If you stop trying to leave.”

“As you wish.”

“Excellent. I’ll get some paper. You strike me as the kind of guy with very nice handwriting; it’d be a shame to not see it in action.”

And then Dr. Graham is gone, through the doors and out of the room, leaving behind only the scent of fresh cut grass with undertones of salted caramel and warm cinnamon running through it. Hannibal breathes in three times before he realizes that he’s actually puffing out his chest, trying to expand his lungs to their full extent to capture the doctor’s scent.

“Hmm,” Hannibal says thoughtfully. “I may have a problem.”

Dr. Graham returns about half an hour later. The reason for the delay becomes clear when Hannibal catches the scent of food, and sure enough, Dr. Graham hands Hannibal not only a notebook but also a ceramic bowl full of some kind of meaty soup and utensils.

“Thank you. Chicken soup?”

“Silkie chicken in a broth,” Dr. Graham corrects, pulling up a chair and revealing a second ceramic bowl. “With wolfberries, ginseng, ginger, red dates and star anise. According to the

café, anyways; they're doing some kind of organic traditional recipes thing. But it smells good."

Hannibal sets down the bowl, feeling pleasantly warmed even though he hasn't consumed one sip. "You could have easily procured me something from the cafeteria. You shouldn't have troubled yourself."

"When you become a doctor, you try to get better at controlling what goes into your body. Or I do, anyways; I've seen a lot of patients who didn't and that was highly motivating. I got the impression you were the same, and I was already heading there to get my own lunch." Dr. Graham pops the lid off and sticks his spoon in. The noise he makes when he closes his mouth around his spoonful is something Hannibal wouldn't think out of place during heat. "This is amazing, you really should try it."

Hannibal hums. "I think most doctors also get better at not eating lunch with their patients. Ones they don't know, anyways."

"I'm starting to know you pretty well. I think we could even become friends."

"Hence the bribe?"

"Nah, the bribe's for something else."

"Indeed," Hannibal says. He places his own spoon inside and begins to transfer soup into his mouth. It is truly amazing; Hannibal is going to have to try to replicate the recipe. The Ripper, after all, struck only two weeks ago, and Hannibal can already imagine which cut of meat to utilize for a soup. "May I ask for what?"

"A gesture of good will. Food being the way to a man's stomach and all that. I'd like to ask you a question, and to get an honest answer."

"Ask away."

"How about you tell me why you filled that hunter with surgical implements, and in return I promise not to tattle to your boss that the Ripper he's looking for is right under his nose?"

Dr. Graham's voice is completely calm as he utters the words, as if discussing the weather. He maintains eye contact too, presumably to see how Hannibal reacts, and his vivid blue eyes are the only reason why Hannibal takes a moment to fully register the words.

Hannibal carefully lays down his spoon. "What do you mean? Surely not one of my coworkers."

"Nope."

"Well, that's a relief. I'd hate to think I was working alongside a killer."

"Alongside? Perhaps in a manner of speaking." Dr. Graham smiles, a sly tint to his eyes. "You keep him close, don't you? A suit to be unrolled and utilized and then neatly packed away when it's done. A beast to hunt and sate the baying for blood, and then a man to turn

that hunt into something beautiful and nourish the beast's need for nutrition. The Chesapeake Ripper, the most wanted serial killer in FBI history, working as the lead agent on the case. I applaud you."

Hannibal has calculated three ways to kill Dr. Graham and two ways to remove his ability to speak by the time Dr. Graham is done speaking. Yet he holds off, partially out of consideration to his still healing wound, and partially due to the intriguing scent he picks up on.

Dr. Graham is, just as his tone conveys, quite amused, and a tiny bit in awe. Hannibal might even go so far as to call him aroused, but the suppressants they are both on would prevent the flow of slick, which is a far more reliable indicator of arousal and attraction. Still, the fact that he seeks information – not to blackmail or analyze or even betray, but merely to sate curiosity – speaks volumes about him.

"Hypothetically," Hannibal begins, "even if you were correct, why not call the FBI? They might be a far better judge of my innocence or guilt than you."

"The FBI thought that moron who cut you open was the Ripper. If they're that dumb, they deserve not to find you."

Dr. Graham sets his spoon down, mirroring Hannibal's posture exactly. He is completely relaxed and completely unafraid, and it is downright intoxicating. Hannibal, after all, usually imagines the immediate fallout to the secret of the Ripper's identity being revealed as blood and guts and death, and he's held that trump card close to avoid a premature confrontation until the day he finally decides to burn it all down and switch gears to evading the FBI full-time. He's never imagined a scenario where the secret of the Ripper's identify being revealed leads to curiosity and acceptance, as opposed to horror and shrieking.

"I won't turn you in," Dr. Graham says. "Your artistry is unrivaled. It'd be a shame to have it locked away in a padded cell."

"I am not insane."

"No, but there's a reason your final game plan is escaping the FBI immediately and not waiting to break out of prison. I'm sure you could, of course. But I'm also sure you'd rather just hop on a plane to Europe and run circles around the FBI from abroad. Feel free to tell me if I'm wrong, though."

"No," Hannibal murmurs. "You're quite correct. You have more than a keen nose, don't you, Will Graham?"

Dr. Graham grins. It makes him look like fox, ready to pounce and reign terror upon the mice living in blissful ignorance beneath the snow. "Little party trick. An active imagination. Reason number two why the FBI would never let me in. But no one questions why a doctor knows things. After all, we went to school and surely absorbed any number of weird trivia facts."

Hannibal drops all pretense of innocence. If Dr. Graham is not willing to turn him in, and his scent indicates no lie, then he has no kind of wire or recording device upon his person. After all, if he was cooperating with the FBI, they'd be pushing him to have Hannibal admit to his crimes, not talk about his inevitable break out. Besides, Hannibal wants to see just how he reacts to a reminder of exactly who he is seeking to pounce upon.

"Weird facts would not save you, should I decide to make you the next piece of art," Hannibal says coolly.

"All curiosity has its price. And I'd be harder to kill than you think."

He might even be telling the truth. Hannibal can lull prey using his pheromones or a polite smile, because no one suspects an omega will kill with their hands and not poison. But Dr. Graham is an omega – he, like Hannibal, is programmed to submit to alphas and omega pheromones will have little effect on him. On top of that, while omegas are more welcome in the medical field to soothe patients, they in turn are trained to control their responses and how they soothe their patients, because if they gave in to their immediate urge to gentle children or snuggle up to alphas, the patient would bleed out.

"So: a secret for a secret, then, Dr. Graham?" Hannibal says.

"A secret for a secret, Agent Lecter," Dr. Graham affirms.

When Hannibal is finally discharged the next day, Dr. Graham is not on shift, so it is a nice but somewhat distracted beta who hands him his discharge instructions, wound care supplies, and his clothes. As he dresses, careful not to aggravate his wound, a slip of paper falls out from inside his coat.

Sharing secrets at a hospital is fun, the note reads in the scrawling barely legible handwriting of a doctor, *but sharing secrets during a date is even better. Meet me at the restaurant? They've got great organic coffee.*

And Hannibal smiles, and inputs the number at the bottom into his phone, and presses *call*.

FINIS

Chapter End Notes

A/N: And Hannibal and Will go on one date, and then two, and then three, and then they get married and live happily ever after. Hannibal cooks and finds killers for the FBI and hunts, and Will treats patients and cleans Hannibal's minor scrapes from his hunts and also sits on him to make him recuperate properly whenever he's injured.

Hint for Day 8: It involves jokes about large packages. Stay tuned for the reveal tomorrow!

Sex Toys - Alpha!Will & Alpha!Hannibal

Chapter Summary

Hannibal really wants to bond with Will, but as they are both alphas, there are two problems: alphas instinctively will fight as rivals and alphas aren't built to take knots like omegas are. Will can tell that Hannibal is trying to solve these problems, but he'd appreciate it more if Hannibal would explain what he was doing. Or why he keeps getting large mysterious packages in the mail.

Chapter Notes

Warnings: knotting & dubcon (basically Hannibal triggers Will's instincts without explaining or getting consent, although Will is definitely DTF and to bond)

Inspired by: All of the hawt A/A fics I've read in other fandoms and of which I found less of in the Hannibal fandom. Like I definitely appreciate and cherish and adore those adding to that pile, but I also figured it was time for me to write what I wanted to see, as it were.

Dynamics: Alpha!Will & Alpha!Hannibal

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will doesn’t question the first package, or the second package, or even the third. He has vivid memories of Hannibal’s house in Baltimore, and he’s well aware that Hannibal has certain tastes and expectations regarding his standard of living. Hell, even the boat that Chiyoh sailed on to scoop them out of the Atlantic like drowning puppies was fancier than any boat Will has seen in a long time.

They have a rather small house now, both as a method of remaining hidden and as a concession to their still healing wounds, which makes it difficult for long bouts of extended and strenuous physical activity. Will’s honestly spent more time napping in the bed or on the sofa or even stretched out flat on the floor than doing anything else.

Hannibal, meanwhile, takes it upon himself to purchase supplies. Firstly he adds to their stock of food and medicine, which Will heartily approves of. Then he branches out into what Will likes to call their murder toolkit, which so far has a couple guns, a dozen knives, a bone saw, and plastic sheets. Finally, he orders more aesthetic or enjoyable things: high thread count sheets, beautifully painted dinner settings, top of the line tablets. Will lets him, partly

because it's Hannibal's bank accounts that are furnishing their lifestyle and partly because he enjoys allowing Hannibal to turn their house into a home.

So Will says nothing about the steady stream of packages and deliveries, each under a different alias from a different company, and he accepts the constant updates to his wardrobe.

However, he does start to get suspicious when Hannibal – usually eager to show off his latest purchase or request Will's opinion on where a newly bought item should be placed in their house – gets one box and just . . . vanishes into his study room with it. And not a small box either; it is large enough to comfortably contain several hefty pans.

Or a human head.

Will gives Hannibal five minutes – long enough to investigate and then squirrel away whatever he ordered, but short enough that he couldn't think up a convincing lie in addition to thinking up an excuse as to why Will should be okay with whatever it is – and then he stands up and follows.

The door to Hannibal's study is unlocked and opens easily under Will's hand. They don't lock any of their doors, anymore, because after spending so long on a single boat and even longer climbing around in each other's heads, privacy seems a moot concern. Will pushes into the room and finds Hannibal sitting primly at his desk, the box nowhere to be found, as expected.

Will raises an eyebrow. "So," he says, "you planning on explaining why there was a surprisingly enormous package for you?"

"Hardly surprising; I was expecting it."

An answer and not an answer. In some ways, Hannibal's gotten a lot better at being direct about what he wants from Will. In other ways, he's just gotten even worse, now that he knows Will's choice will always be him, no matter how irritating he gets.

Will can't really blame him. He knows that he has just grown blunter, now that he knows Hannibal's choice will always be him, no matter how irritating he gets. "Whose head is it?" Will asks in resignation.

Hannibal blinks. "Don't be ridiculous, Will. I would hardly send a human head through the mail."

"Alana told me about the whole Chilton lip thing."

"And that was, as you noted, lips. Not an entire head."

Will sighs and gives up. If he really wanted to know, he could try to crawl back into Hannibal's head and figure out exactly why Hannibal is hiding the package, because something he wants to surprise with Will and something he wants to conceal from Will are two very different things. But sometimes, if Hannibal is putting a barrier in his way, Will just

goes along with it, because eventually Hannibal will get bored of the game and play his hand. Or it'll be something so minor Will forgets about it two days later.

Will extends a hand. "You promised me bacon wrapped chicken for lunch, and I'm hungry."

"Lunch is still an hour away," Hannibal comments, but he rises anyways.

Will has found that Hannibal's food thing goes far beyond his obsession for overelaborate rituals, rich spices, and exotic arrangements on plates. As soon as he could move his arms, he was trying to cook for them. When Will wades into the waters, he can sense something buried deep, deep down about food, from a time in Hannibal's past when food was not available, something so powerful and rooted at his core that it influences his every move. It's the alpha obsession to provide ramped up to extreme. Most people would be bothered by it; Will is merely understanding. And charmed by how at the mere mention of hunger, Hannibal is willing to drop everything and cook for Will.

"But you'll make me whatever I want anyways," Will says as Hannibal draws close.

Hannibal takes his hand and kisses his forehead. He rubs his cheek against Will's, transferring scent like he can't help himself, but even as he leans down, he is careful to avoid getting too close to Will's neck. After all, for all that Will knows logically that Hannibal is his and welcomes Hannibal's alpha scent as part of his home and territory, his alpha hindbrain registers the scent of alpha and screams *intruder* and *rival*.

"Yes," Hannibal murmurs. "I will."

"And maybe later you'll tell me what secret you're hiding?"

Hannibal smiles; Will can feel the way his lips twitch against Will's skin. "Maybe. Or maybe you will find out on your own, Agent Graham."

"Just go make me food," Will laughs, pushing him away. "Like my doctor ordered."

Hannibal kisses him on the cheek again and then departs. Will looks around the room for a moment, gauging potential hiding spots against Hannibal's flair for the dramatic, and once he's identified at least six possible spots he slips out of the room and heads to the kitchen to swipe bits of food as Hannibal cooks.

Later that night, Hannibal decides that he needs to launder all of their sheets, so Will is exiled from the bedroom while Hannibal gathers the sheets, washes them, and then places them back. Will doesn't argue; there's a reason Will does the repairs and Hannibal does the cooking and laundry.

On the bright side, it does allow him to go back into Hannibal's study and investigate.

His first guess is empty, and so is his second, but on the third spot, he hits jackpot. Hannibal has tucked a tasteful black box inside the false bottom of his lowest drawer, although when Will opens it he finds he's been beaten to the punch, as the box is empty.

Will smiles. “So that’s how it is,” he says, replacing the box and leaving.

Will finds and investigates the second box, and the third, and the fourth, and the fifth. They are all empty when he gets to them, but each is in a different hidden spot in Hannibal’s study. It becomes a game, then, like when they used to dance around the fact that Hannibal was the Ripper but infinitely less full of blood and guts and gore than that dance. Hannibal refuses to acknowledge that the boxes exist, Will tries to determine their purpose and motive, and they go back and forth.

He does find the deluxe order of lube, though.

“Uh, were we short?” Will asks in amazement, trailing after Hannibal as he starts stashing lube all over the house. “Cuz that’s. Uh. That’s. A lot of lube.”

They’ve had sex, of course. Most of it has been of the gentle rutting variety, partly because both of them have never slept with another alpha before and partly because Hannibal waited a damn long time to actually approve them having sex. (If Will jerked off in their bed while Hannibal watched just to see him break and jump on Will, that’s his business.) But even though Hannibal’s appetite for Will is voracious and unending, he’s just as happy to climax on Will as he is to scent Will, so they haven’t really gone through that too much lube.

“Your rut is approaching,” Hannibal reminds him as he puts two more bottles in the downstairs bathroom.

“Oh, yeah.” Will makes a face. He hates rut – hates how his mind gets clouded and his priorities shift away from food to humping anything that holds still – but adding suppressants to their cocktail of medicine would probably cause issues. On top of that, suppressants are more highly regulated than other drugs, and while Hannibal’s fake identities are good, there is a possibility they’d be detected. “I was just gonna check into a rut hotel, though.”

Hannibal gives him a scandalized look. “Absolutely not.”

“There wouldn’t be any omegas there, you know,” Will points out. “I wouldn’t accidently bond with anyone.”

“There’d be other alphas there.”

Hannibal’s tone makes it very clear what he thinks of other alphas, and honestly, he’s probably right. Rut hotels aren’t famous for high quality service, because what alphas really need is just a strong locked door and a bed to sleep on when the rut ends, and so they aren’t exactly very expensive and almost anyone can afford them. Heat hotels are generally where the fancier rooms are at, because omegas tend to require nests of soft blankets and fluffy pillows.

“Okay? But that might be a good thing. Smelling another alpha would probably knock me out of rut and then I could come home faster.”

“No,” Hannibal says shortly. “Being knocked out of a rut is almost as dangerous as overdosing on suppressants. When your body begins to build up all the pheromones and hormones, the worst thing that can happen is for you suddenly revert to your normal behavior instead of riding the wave out to its natural conclusion.”

Will has heard of that, but he’d always thought it was nonsense. Then again, he supposes that tales of alphas who overdosed on suppressants are more easily sensationalized than alphas who are knocked out of rut by smelling another alpha nearby.

Unless the alpha is knocked out of rut by a rival and someone dies. Then it’s a sensationalized murder investigation.

Will throws up his hands. “Fine, then what do you propose?”

“We bond,” Hannibal says, as easily as he’d offered Will a ride to the house on the cliff. As if it’s perfectly natural and normal and reasonable, and not a step into a path of darkness where life or death is a two-headed coin flipped by a capricious god and life is not the guaranteed outcome.

“Hannibal,” Will says slowly. “We can’t bond.”

“We fit every definition of a bonded couple,” Hannibal notes, stashing yet more lube in the living room. “We have courted and found each other desirable. We share a territory together. We have even hunted together and brought down a sizeable prey by working together, although that definition has fallen to the wayside in more recent times.”

“You’re forgetting the most important definition, and that’s a bite to seal the bond during rut,” Will points out. “An alpha can only bond during rut. And if I smell you during rut or you smell me, we’ll be knocked straight out because alphas are rivals.”

Hannibal’s nose wrinkles. It’s not surprise – he has clearly remembered this important facet of their biology – but more like annoyance, like he hasn’t managed to force this undesirable and irritating obstacle to submit under his formidable iron will. Will wouldn’t bet against him, exactly, but he also really doesn’t want to test his or Hannibal’s alpha instinct against each other, since most alphas knocked out of rut by another tend to go straight for the kill if the other alpha doesn’t leave immediately. And he’s seen Hannibal go for the kill.

“You are so much more than a rival to me,” Hannibal says quietly.

“And you to me,” Will says, wrapping his arms around Hannibal and resting his face against his shoulder, feeling the tension in Hannibal’s muscles. He rubs his face against Hannibal’s back, scenting and being scented, and feels Hannibal breathe out and slowly relax. “But we only just convinced our biology that we weren’t actively dying. Perhaps we should wait a bit before attempting to convince it that we are also meant to be bonded.”

“I won’t wait forever, Will.”

“What’s the rush? I’m not going anywhere.”

“Not if you let us bond, you won’t.”

Will closes his eyes and sighs. It’s true that there are other benefits to a bond. Bonded couples usually develop a sort of sixth sense of their mate, generally about to guess their mood and seek them out if they are separated. The longer they are bonded, the stronger the bond. And if they’re bonded long enough, usually if one dies, the other follows shortly afterwards, meaning that neither is left alone in life or the afterlife for long.

However, Will suspects that Hannibal is thinking of other, more practical benefits. After all, bonded couples cannot be separated in prison, and they cannot be sentenced to death. It is considered incredibly cruel to end the life of one, no matter the crime, if it means killing the other, who might be innocent or sentenced merely to life in prison. If they were bonded – even though it’s nigh impossible for alphas to bond with each other – even Jack could not separate them if they were caught, and no court would sentence them to death, meaning Hannibal could easily escape, given time.

“If only we were both omegas,” Will murmurs. “Omegas need only be in heat to bond, and that’s not an issue if they’re both in heat.”

Hannibal closes his hands over Will’s. “Or if one of us was an omega. The scent of a compatible omega’s slick can trigger a rut.”

“You’d like that, wouldn’t you?” Will asks, deeply amused at the thought. “Triggering my rut and tying me to you that way. Knowing, irrefutably, that our bodies considered us as compatible as our minds do.”

“But of course. Is it not appealing to you?”

Will imagines being an omega. He imagines watching Hannibal’s eyes dilate and his irises darken to the red of a rutting alpha, imagines Hannibal dropping everything to chase after him, imagines Hannibal thrown head-first into a rut where he will lose all control and want nothing but Will, Will, Will. He can’t deny it makes the alpha beast deep inside of him groan with pleasure, to know that his mate desires him above all else and can descend into madness at the smallest whiff of his scent.

But they are alphas, born and bred, and all attempts to turn an alpha into an omega or vice versa have failed quite spectacularly.

“If only,” Will says wistfully. “But hey. We’ve never used the spare room. I can bunk down there, because it doesn’t smell like you, and as long as you’re careful when you cook and slide in food, I should be good. Is that an acceptable compromise?”

Hannibal sighs, deeply and sadly. “For now.”

Hannibal’s nose is, as always, a very good early warning system, because not more than a week after he starts stashing lube everywhere does Will wake up with the tell-tale pre-rut symptoms. Hannibal has already risen, because he’s a disgustingly early morning bird, but Will wakes up feeling like his skin is on fire, with all of the blankets on the floor and his

sleeping pants soaked from sweat. When he hops in the shower, even the water pressure of their admittedly not the best shower head hitting the back of his neck is enough to have him hissing and recoiling, expecting an attack. Worst of all, he can't even enter their closet to select his clothing, because their closet smells like Hannibal and Will, and Will's hindbrain starts shrieking *rival to be killed rival to be killed rival to killed* like a goddamn broken alarm clock.

So he scrounges some clothes out of his luggage, some baggy and ratty clothing that never got moved into their closet because Hannibal threatened to set it on fire if he ever laid eyes upon it again, and then stomps downstairs, grouchy and knowing he's grouchy because of his impending rut.

When he gets to the kitchen, the scent of Hannibal and fresh pancakes drifts towards him, and Will actually staggers back and has to grip the edge of the wall to steady himself.

Rival, his alpha hindbrain insists, *RIVAL*.

Will puts his hand over his nose and takes a deep breath. Pre-rut usually lasts at least three to five days before rut starts, and if he doesn't get a grip, he and Hannibal are going to fight, and not because of Hannibal's mysteries boxes. "Get a grip, Graham," Will mutters.

Hannibal, when he turns around to greet Will, is tense, but his voice is perfectly smooth and warm as always. "Good morning, Will."

"I see you're doing better with the scent of a rival alpha than I am," Will says bitterly.

A smile flickers across Hannibal's face. Normally, Hannibal reacts to his grumpy mornings with a hug or scenting. But Hannibal stays away today, knowing that a hug and scenting might provoke a full on attack, and knowing that makes Will even grumpier than before, because during pre-rut he both craves warm bodies to snuggle and hates being around people in his vulnerable state.

"Before Alana took over control of the BSHCI," Hannibal explains, neatly plating a stack of pancakes and arranging freshly cut swan strawberries around them, "Chilton decided to deny me suppressants for my first year of imprisonment. I was exposed to a great deal of what my hindbrain considered rival alphas in that time."

"I didn't know about that."

"It was kept very quiet. After all, no one wished to admit that they nearly allowed me a route to freedom by just to sate their curiosity of how I would act in full rut."

"How many did you kill?"

"Only five. One of the guards was a beta and therefore was able to escape into the upper levels while I focused on the alphas. It took three rounds of tranquilizer to subdue me."

Will looks sharply at Hannibal. "Please tell me you have a stronger tranquilizer on hand to stop me, if necessary."

“Chloroform works just as well on a rutting alpha as a normal one.”

Will takes exactly two seconds to think about the last time someone used chloroform on him, and then Hannibal in that exact same position, and then he has to quickly stop thinking about it because he’s bending his fork with how tight he’s gripping it. As Hannibal turns to get syrup, Will quickly pulls the fork under the table to straighten it.

“You do know that I am stronger in rut than normal, right?”

“I have undergone rut too, Will.”

“Are you sure you can get close enough to chloroform me?”

Fortunately, Hannibal understands that Will isn’t questioning his ability to plan or fight so much as he’s questioning whether Hannibal is willing to get in close and be on the receiving end of furious and powerful blows from a rutting alpha. After all, while Hannibal is strong enough to overpower people, his style of fighting tends to mirror his serial killer style – strike fast and simple and effectively, not overwhelm with brute force. But while in rut, Will is far less likely to be slowed by fast and simple strikes, no matter how effective they are, and to get close enough to chloroform him, Hannibal will likely end up with bruises. And possibly a bite mark, depending on how much Will loses control.

Hannibal pushes the syrup over, and when Will reaches out to grab it, he deliberately lays his hand on top. Will tenses.

“You have my word,” Hannibal vows, “I will not let you leave this house until your rut ends.”

To anyone else, it would be a threat.

To Will, it’s an affirmation, and a reassuring one at that. So he relaxes, soothed at the knowledge that he won’t end up running naked through the streets attacking everyone he comes across, and then he picks up his now crooked fork and knife and begins devouring his pancakes with a vengeance.

Opposite him, Hannibal hums thoughtfully. “Perhaps I should order more food.”

“Oh, yeah, definitely. I’m the gorging type of alpha.”

“I am not.”

At any other moment, Will would find it interesting, because alphas fall into two types of responses pre-rut, and it’s to either eat everything in sight or lose appetite altogether, and to learn that chef extraordinaire Hannibal is the type who can’t stand a single bite of food probably means something. But right now, everything in Will is howling at him to eat until their fridge is empty and then eat some more, so Will just buries his face in his pancakes and licks up every single crumb until the plate is clean.

“A lot more food,” Hannibal sighs when Will wordlessly presents his empty plate, but his eyes are very pleased, and he makes pancakes without a word until Will is so full he can hardly twitch.

“I’m going . . . to lie down now,” Will says, pushing away his syrup and crumb filled plate with a wince. “See if I can sleep off the hunger.”

“A bath might serve you better.”

“Yeah, it usually does, but everything in there is yours,” Will points out. He’d suggested, just for a joke, for Hannibal to buy Will’s usual shampoo and conditioner and soap. Hannibal had flatly declined. “I’d probably just break the bathtub.”

Hannibal sighs. “Very well. I placed some freshly washed sheets in the spare room yesterday; they shouldn’t smell too much of me.”

“Thanks.”

Will ends up sleeping the entire day away, because when he wakes up with a jolt, nearly falling off the bed, everything is pitch black. Hunger roars to life again in his stomach, so it is with visions of chicken and pasta and rice and bacon and waffles that Will rises, fumbles to turn on a light, fails to find any because they never put a light in the spare room, and then starts to stumble out of the room grumbling under his breath.

He makes it exactly one step out of the room when every single sense in his body goes on high alert, because he smells *omega*. Omega slick, to be exact, not in heat, but absolutely perfect, everything he craves, so delicious that he can feel his mouth beginning to water already.

The first thought that goes through his head is why the goddamn hell Hannibal would let any omega near their front door, never mind in their house.

The second thought is that the scent of omega is strong and pervasive and also slightly familiar.

The third thought is that the hunger within his stomach is burning brightly, but on a completely different path now, as though his train has hopped tracks from heading to the pre-rut station to full steam ahead to total and complete rut.

“Hello, Will.”

Hannibal goddamn Lecter steps into the moonlight. He is almost completely naked, but for satin silk briefs, white as the moonlight they’re reflecting, and he stands there, completely at ease, no chloroform in sight, like he hasn’t got a care in the world.

Will growls on instinct, lowering into a fighting stance as his hindbrain yells *RIVAL* at him, but then Hannibal takes another step, and Will’s hindbrain falls all over itself like a puppy tangled in its own leash.

MATE MATE MATE, Will’s hindbrain roars, the thundering crescendo of a waterfall that is going to sweep Will over the cliffs into rut.

“What – What the hell did you do?” Will demands, shuddering with the desire to chase and bite.

Hannibal smiles, teeth flashing in the darkness. He smells absolutely divine now, mostly like himself but partially like Will, and all like an omega on the cusp of heat, spreading his legs for the nearest passing alpha to quench his flames and slake his thirst. It’s the strangest sensation, to have Will’s logical side insisting he is an alpha and cannot be mated while his alpha hindbrain demands that he pin Hannibal down and fill him with his seed until his belly is so swollen he has to waddle to the bathroom, pregnant with Will’s children and indelibly marked as Will’s for all to see.

“Do you know that companies make custom slick? All they require is some of your scent. It was easy to collect some of your sweat and mine.”

Will takes a helpless step forward. It’s a compromise to keep the rut from consuming him entirely, but he already knows it’s a useless quest. Now that he’s begun, and especially because he’s begun due to an omega’s scent, he’ll keep going until he burns out, sates his desires, or dies. “You – I – You’ve never taken a knot before,” Will stutters, clenching his fists until he feels the sting of his fingernails parting skin. “I’ll tear your apart, with my teeth and my knot.”

Hannibal, in answer, simply turns and bends over, allowing Will to see the outline of something large pressing against his briefs.

If he were more cognizant, he might even recognize what it is. Unfortunately, his hindbrain – upon being assaulted not only by an omega’s scent, but a compatible omega and now a presenting one – finally breaks the last tenuous grips of Will’s control, and he snarls and leaps straight at Hannibal, intent on pinning him down and biting his neck and spearing him on his knot.

Hannibal laughs and runs, and Will gives chase, growling loud enough to echo down the hallway, but Hannibal has just enough of a head start to make it to their bedroom before Will tackles him onto the mattress.

Lost to the rut, Will bites down hard on the satin and *rips*, the boost in strength from rut allowing him to tear the briefs easily, exposing Hannibal’s bare skin and getting a face full of what is apparently customized slick. There is an obstacle inside of Hannibal already, but Will pulls it out easily, delighting in the way Hannibal arches his back and groans as a gush of more slick follows the release of whatever toy Hannibal was using.

“You are mine,” Will growls, “mine, mine, mine, mine, mine.”

“Yours,” Hannibal moans, “yours, yours, Will, yes, please, do it.”

And then Will is at home, teeth and knot buried deep where he belongs, and Hannibal screams and convulses and bucks hard, but Will is never going to let his mate go, not ever in a million years, so he traps Hannibal down and bites down harder, until he tastes blood and Hannibal goes limp against him.

“Mine,” Will rasps, licking frantically at the bloody bite back. “Mine.”

“Yes,” Hannibal sighs. “Yours.”

Will bites him again, and again, and again, each time his vision getting hazier and redder as his rut melts every single thought process, until he finally blacks out.

When it’s over, Hannibal is bruised and bloody and limping, but he is still somehow able to beam as he carefully lays out the dozen or so sex toys he ordered in to ensure that he could take Will’s knot during a rut. It’s quite a collection, as one looks small enough to easily be concealed and the last looks large enough to rival Will’s fist for size. One is even inflatable.

Will, who is undergoing the usual post-rut stages of queasiness and drowsiness wrapped up in a blanket like a burrito, stares.

“So . . . this is what you were ordering in those packages?” Will asks slowly.

Hannibal inclines his head. “I was advised by a forum that, generally speaking, it was better to slowly increase the size to find what one was comfortable with.”

“You . . . went on a forum. To ask other people. How best to take my knot.”

“Well, there is a severe lack of scientific research regarding alpha/alpha pairings. I turned to the next best source of information.”

Will tries to compute the image of Hannibal Lecter, prim and proper Chesapeake Ripper, going onto an alpha/alpha forum to request tips on how to take it up the butt, and promptly fails. Then again, it does help explain why Hannibal has seemed unusually tense the weeks before Will’s rut, since he already told Will that he learned to control the instinctive must-kill-rival reaction from his time at the BSHCI.

“How long have you been planning this?”

Hannibal fidgets. “Since it became clear we could not go back on suppressants without risking our health.”

“That’s . . . a long time.”

“And now we are bonded,” Hannibal says cheerfully. He touches the still raw bite mark on the side of his neck, and pleasure blooms in his scent as he does so. Will bit him many times, of course, but the others will heal without a mark. This bite, deep enough to draw blood and with rut hormones coursing in Will’s saliva, will scar smooth and satiny and shiny, alerting any and all that Hannibal belongs to someone. “We can never be separated.”

“So where’d the idea for custom slick come from?”

“A hypothesis I had,” Hannibal explains. “If you smelt me as an alpha during your rut, you would be knocked out of it and attempt to kill me. But if you smelt me as an omega and we were compatible, you’d be sent straight into rut, and you would bite me and bond with me

before your mind was able to register that I was, in fact, not an omega and only smelled very much like one. Custom slick is a very niche market, but it is rapidly expanding as a way to test the compatibility of mates without risking anyone's neck if the scent turns out to be aggravating rather than attracting. The company I chose was beyond happy to receive an order, and I tipped very generously."

Will scrubs at his face. "Of course you did. And where you'd get the samples?"

"You sweat a lot when you sleep, Will."

Will decides against going further down that rabbit hole, because he suspects he won't particularly like the answer of how exactly Hannibal procured the samples. Especially since Hannibal has a lot of free time to do things when Will is still getting his regular eight hours but Hannibal has finished his typical four or five, although Will had thought that the weirdest thing Hannibal would choose to occupy his free time with was ordering more antler décor or sketching Will in more and more suggestive drawings.

So instead Will sighs and leans against the headboard and extends an arm. Hannibal takes it immediately, as he always does, and when Will pulls him close he doesn't resist at all, pushing the sex toys away with a leg and curling up next to Will.

Will nuzzles against Hannibal's neck and takes a deep breath. For the first time, when he inhales Hannibal's scent, his hindbrain happily purrs *mate* instead of blaring *rival-to-kill*. When he starts to rub his cheek against Hannibal's shoulder, scenting him, even Hannibal's hindbrain seems to recognize him as mate and not mortal enemy, because Hannibal purrs as well.

"Your experiment was a success," Will says.

"I know."

"Hmm. Got any more weird large packages you're expecting for secret experiments?"

"Not currently."

"Yeah, that's about as good of an answer as I was expecting," Will admits.

He lifts his face, seeking, and Hannibal answers with a kiss, ravenous as always for any bit of Will. Warmth blooms in Will's chest, an echo of rut-fire but much softer and gentler, a fire to warm instead of a fire to consume everything in sight. Now that they're bonded, Hannibal's scent will be Will's true north, and his touch will be as powerful a hit as any drug.

Hannibal opens his mouth and scrapes his teeth against Will's neck, testing and putting pressure but not breaking skin. "When I am in rut," Hannibal murmurs, "I will need to bite you as well, so that all will know we are one."

Of course, now that they're bonded, Hannibal won't be knocked out of rut at the scent of Will, but still. Will has to ask. "So does that mean I need to slather on the fake slick and browse the forums for tips on how to use fake knots?"

“I will take as much or as little as you choose to grant me, my darling.”

“Wow, that’s entirely unhelpful. Do you have a more helpful opinion on the subject of shower sex?”

Hannibal added Will to all of his accounts and at least half of his fake credit cards, so it’s very easy for Will to dig through his receipts until he finds exactly what company Hannibal ordered the custom slick through. Will does a little digging and learns that every custom slick is a little bit different, even if it involves the same people, just because it’s not quite an exact science and also compatibility is a range, so an alpha might find two or more scents acceptable if they come from the same originator.

With that question answered, Will gleefully sends off two samples, tips generously, and hides the resulting order in his car when it arrives.

By the time Hannibal descends into pre-rut, hardly eating anything but cleaning even more obsessively than before, Will is more than ready to give him a taste of his own medicine – and to take Hannibal’s knot.

The pained growl Hannibal emits when he wakes up to find Will sitting on top of him and smiling, naked as the day he was born and so full of slick that he’s actually sliding a little bit on Hannibal’s waist, is worth every single moment Will spent panting in the bathroom and trying desperately not to make a loud sound and alert Hannibal that something was going on.

“Will, you – Will,” Hannibal says desperately.

“Your turn, alpha-mine,” Will says cheerily. “I even ordered a size up from your biggest, so we should be good to go.”

It turns out that getting bitten by a rut-crazed alpha while stuck on their knot is actually pretty nice, thanks to a combination of things in Hannibal’s saliva and the thrill of getting pinned down and mated. Will can see why Hannibal liked it, even if Hannibal has more of a masochistic edge than Will does.

Even better, when it’s over, Will has a raw bite-bond to match Hannibal’s.

“You,” Hannibal moans into a pillow, out of breath and wheezing, “are a menace, Will Graham.”

“Don’t start things you can’t finish,” Will advises. “So. What’s for dinner?”

FINIS

Chapter End Notes

A/N: And then Hannibal and Will are bonded, and they single-handedly contribute to the expansion of the market for custom slick because they keep using it to trigger ruts in each other. They also have a lot of sex toys and every time the FBI catches up to them, they take the opportunity to refresh and/or update their collection, as it were.

Hint for Day 9: It involves one of our murder husbands babysitting for the other. Stay tuned for the reveal in two days instead of tomorrow, because IT'S ALMOST NEW YEAR'S Y'ALL! (I am planning to eat a lot of chocolate, watch the ball drop and the fireworks, and maybe see Star Wars: Rise of Skywalker. This may or may not result in tears and/or a Star Wars Hannigram AU. We'll see, although if anyone wants a SW AU lemme know in a comment lol)

To everyone who's been reading and kudos-ing and commenting: THANK YOU SO MUCH for coming on this journey with me, thank you for supporting me, thank you for putting a smile on my face and a song in my heart. ❤️❤️❤️

Surprise Guests - Alpha!Will & Omega!Hannibal

Chapter Summary

Will isn't exactly surprised that he was right about the Chesapeake Ripper being an omega, but he is surprised that Hannibal Lecter has twin omega daughters. He's even more surprised when Jack drops the children off at Will's house because no one else will babysit the Ripper's daughters.

Chapter Notes

Warnings: noncon drugging (Hannibal messing with Will, what else is new) & Jack being a big a--hole

Inspired by: Nothing in particular I just thought it would be funny if Jack made Will babysit Hannibal's children.

Dynamics: Alpha!Will & Omega!Hannibal

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Will quits the FBI, frustrated that he's been hired to give insight yet no one actually wants to listen to the insight he gives, he disconnects his phone, cancels his e-mail, and redirects all official mail to a PO box. Mostly this is to annoy Jack Crawford, because the alpha accepts everything Will says as gospel except what he says about the Ripper and the Ripper is perhaps one killer Will connects to most strongly. Yet a tiny part of Will is also relieved – relieved to be alone in his little house with his pack of dogs, cut off from the press and the FBI and the whole wide world, able to spend his days fishing and taking long walks with his happy dogs.

The only thing he keeps is his television, and only because without a phone, he relies on the television for a weather forecast. But even so, usually he forgets he has it and just glances at the door and goes outside anyways. His dogs are just as thrilled to walk in the rain as they are when it's dry, after all.

This is probably why Will has no idea what it is going on in the world, and no warning before Jack Crawford turns up at his door.

Will's dogs scratch and whine and bark, so Will just sighs and pushes open the door. They do need to do their business outside, and if they mob Jack and get fur all over his nice suit, that's his problem.

“What are you doing here, Jack?” Will asks.

Jack scowls, stomping through the snow with a briefcase in one hand and some papers in the other, eventually succeeding in becoming no longer interesting to Will’s pack when he makes it onto the porch. The dogs then bound off to play in the snow and chase each other.

“Have you seen the news?” Jack says abruptly.

“Nope.”

“I warned you becoming a hermit wouldn’t be good for you.”

“I think becoming a hermit has been great,” Will retorts. “I’m no longer waking up every hour with nightmares or hallucinating. And I’m saving a ton on dogsitters. So. Why are you here again? I quit. You even accepted my resignation.”

“Temporarily.”

“I’m not reapplying.”

“Maybe the morning’s newspaper will make you sing a different tune,” Jack says confidently, because he’s the kind of alpha who thinks everyone who agrees with him is smart and everyone who disagrees with him is an idiot. He’s cognizant to realize when to apply this line of thinking – for example, it’s allowed for the forensics team to make their own realizations – but when it comes to choosing to work for the FBI, Jack thinks his is the only path.

Will takes one glance at paper in Jack’s outstretched hand. *CHESAPEAKE RIPPER REVEALED AS HANNIBAL THE CANNIBAL*, the headline reads.

Will tsks. “Tasteless.”

“No, what’s tasteless is the second paragraph after that headline.”

Will sighs and keeps reading. The first paragraph is bland sensational outcry, discussing the Ripper’s high body count and elaborate displays, and the leading theory that the Ripper had been an alpha who chose to devote their drive to succeed in a more murderous direction. Will reads that without comment, given that it had been the crux of the disagreement between him and Jack.

Then he gets to the second paragraph.

“‘Dr. Hannibal Lecter, a practicing omega psychiatrist’?” Will echoes. “‘With two omega daughters, who might take after their dam a little too much to be allowed into society’s breeding population’? Are you joking? Who let the press into that? Those children would be murdered in the court of public opinion.”

“They already have been,” Jack says grimly. “You were right, Will. The Chesapeake Ripper was an omega with a children. Or in this case, children. Two twin girls. Abby and Gael.”

“If only you had listened,” Will comments, crossing his arms.

Jack spreads his arms, as though he was helpless to listen instead of being the guy who hired Will to talk. “Look, I’m sorry, Will. Is that what you want to hear? I should’ve trusted you on this.”

“You should have done a lot of things.”

“I need your help.”

Will looks at Jack again, and this time, he realizes that Jack left his car running. On top of that, Will’s pack is paying a lot of attention to the backseat of the car, barking and wagging their tails. When Will squints, he can just about make out the heads of two people in the backseat, either really short adults or two small children. And, well, Will didn’t get hired by the FBI because he couldn’t connect the dots.

Will looks back at Jack. “Absolutely not.”

“The girls need an alpha.”

“You’re an alpha.”

“I have a wife who’s dying of cancer,” Jack snaps, pain trembling through each syllable like they’re salt thrown on an open wound. “I can’t bring anyone near her, and especially not unknowns.”

“Oh, but it’s okay to let me do it? I’m not the paternal type.”

“Doesn’t matter. They’re omegas. They’re respond to any alpha authority figure. Look, Will,” Jack says, stepping closer and lowering his voice, “you were the only one who figured out that the Ripper is an omega. You were the only one who knew what his displays meant. You were the only one who could get into his head. That means you’re probably the only one who can figure out what these girls know and whether they’re a danger to society. You’re also an alpha, and lord knows these girls need an alpha figure after their dam turned out to be a cannibal serial killer. And you’re out of the public eye, even Freddie Lounds doesn’t come after you anymore; no one would know these girls are here or go after them.”

“I am hearing nothing in those words that acknowledges I am not the paternal type. Or that I have no supplies to take care of children.”

“The FBI approved you as a temporary agent again as of this morning,” Jack reveals. “But the employment is classified, so no one can find out. You’ll get a stipend to take care of their needs on top of your salary. You also get a gun and badge again.”

He holds out the suitcase. Will stares at it, even more aghast than before.

“If you think I’m going to shoot children on your say so,” Will snarls, “you’re even more off in your idea of me than I thought. Get out, Jack.”

Jack grabs his arm as Will turns away. “No one else will take them in,” Jack says harshly, finally revealing why he’s driven so many hours out of his way to demand a favor from Will. “If you don’t take them, they spend the rest of the trial in isolation at juvenile detention. And

since I doubt any foster family will take on the children of the Chesapeake Ripper, they'll end up in an orphanage, if any orphanage will ever have them. Is that what you want?"

It's blatantly unfair and unsubtle emotional manipulation. Every alpha is hardwired to provide, but that drive is twice as high when children are involved.

The manipulation is tempered somewhat by Will's knowledge that Jack really just wants Will to find out just how much the children knew, and juvenile detention would likely mean the children would clam up rather than spill, but Will's instincts don't care about silly things like logic and knowledge and rationalization. All Will's instincts know is two omega children are cold and alone and helpless in the world, and if he refuses them shelter, they'll be preyed upon by the FBI, the press, and everyone else in the goddamn world. And no alpha wants to be the one who lets the next generation die.

Will looks out into the snow again, and this time he actually gets a look at the two children, because they've slipped out of the car during the conversation, giving into the temptation to pet Will's dogs. They look like blonde little angels, bundled in matching coats to go with their matching appearances, but they also have two identical smiles as the dogs lick and sniff them.

And, well. Will already knows what his answer is going to be.

But first: "Who's the sire? Why hasn't she or he been contacted for custody?"

"We haven't found the sire yet, and Lecter isn't talking."

"Did Lecter kill them?"

"It's a distinct possibility. But officially, Bedelia Du Maurier is alive and living in Europe. When we find her, you can ask her all the questions you want."

"Fine," Will says. He grabs the newspaper, and he also accepts the badge Jack hands over. But he refuses the suitcase when Jack proffers it. "I'm not going to shoot children, Jack. No matter what they know."

"And if others come here for the children?"

"You said yourself no one knows. You'd better make sure of that. Besides. You and I both know an alpha has a great deal of leeway when it comes to protecting their pack."

Half an hour later, Jack drives away with an empty car and a grim expression. Will hauls in the luggage – two duffel bags of hastily purchased clothing, four boxes of brand new shoes, a stack of children's picture books – and then has to stop in the upstairs hallway because he needs to grab new sheets and pillow cases. After all, he's made his life revolve entirely and comfortably around his first floor, and hasn't gone upstairs in a long time.

Once the bedroom is acceptably habitable for two little girls, Will goes back downstairs to find the two children sitting on his sofa, backs straight and hands firmly clasped in their laps,

as if awaiting punishment from a strict teacher.

“I’m, uh. I’m Will Graham,” he says awkwardly. “Lemme just go call my dogs, before they wander too far.”

A sharp whistle and many whuffing footsteps later, Will is settled back in the living room, having awkwardly appropriated a chair from the kitchen, since the only thing besides the sofa in the living room are a dozen comfortable dog beds. Will has on occasion sat on them, but right now his dogs are making full use of them, so he just grabs a chair.

“You’re probably wondering why you’re here,” Will starts.

One of the girls cuts him off. “We’re here because they said our papa is a bad man,” she says, voice reedy and vibrating with suppressed emotion. “And no one else will take us.”

“And because here could be a good place for now. My nearest neighbors are far away, and I live alone. No one will bother you.”

“Papa made sure no one bothered us,” the girl says fiercely. “You aren’t Papa.”

Will raises his hand, feeling each word like a lash against skin. After all, if an alpha can compel an omega with voice and pheromones, an omega has a whole armory to choose from. Few things wound an alpha more than an omega’s rejection, but especially an omega child’s rejection. “And I don’t intend to be. I just intend to provide you food and shelter and sanctuary from the press. That’s it.”

The girl regards him with bright, glassy eyes. Will can even smell the unshed tears.

“Are you hungry?” Will tries.

The girls shake their heads, almost in unison. It would be a little creepy if Will wasn’t so used to tinkering with an engine and then looking up to see all of his dogs’ heads raised in the exact same direction, having heard something Will could not.

“Thirsty?”

Another set of twin headshakes.

“Okay. How about I give you the tour, then?”

They hop off the couch, which Will takes as agreement. He shows them the kitchen, including the fridge and microwave (“I’d prefer you ask before using the stove, please”) and the downstairs bedroom (“I’ll be sleeping here, so if you need me, just knock. Or wake up one of the dogs”) before going upstairs. There, he points out the bathroom, the spare room filled with odds and ends, and the bedroom, dusty but serviceable.

The girls haven’t stopped holding hands since they entered, but one of them looks up at Will as they peer around the bedroom. “We’ll have all of the upstairs to ourselves?”

“I don’t normally use it, so, uh. Yeah. Do you . . . want me to sleep upstairs?”

“No,” says a girl, and her voice is so soft and muted Will can instantly tell that she’s the one who hasn’t spoken the entire time.

Will inclines his head. “Okay then. I’m going to make some dinner, because I am hungry. I’ll leave leftovers in the fridge, so if either of you wake up hungry, help yourselves. Uh, if you don’t want the dogs to join you, close the door. But if you leave it open after you go to the bathroom or something, one of them may join you. Out of curiosity.”

“Curiosity killed the piggy,” the softer voiced girl says, almost sing-song.

The Chesapeake Ripper considers his victims pigs, to be slaughtered and eaten, because they were worthy of nothing but a place on the dinner table to nourish others, Will remembers arguing to Jack, in one of the last fights they had before Will quit in a fit of resignation, chilled to the bone by the realization that he would never be accepted or listened to.

Jack had always insisted that only an alpha would do that. Will had argued, fruitlessly, that omegas were providers as well, and both omegas and alpha were capable of seeing people as lesser beings. Jack had disagreed.

Will swallows down a fit uneasiness. “That’s . . . interesting. I always heard it as curiosity kills the cat.”

The girl tilts her head, seemingly considering it. After a moment, she just turns her head and skips off to the bed, neither rejecting nor accepting Will’s statement. The other girl stares at Will, as if challenging him to make a comment, so Will quickly turns and heads back downstairs. He hasn’t gotten than the staircase before he hears the door click firmly closed.

When Will reaches the first floor, all of his dogs are arrayed in front of the stairs, curiosity shining from their eyes.

“Well, that went well,” Will sighs. “Come on, you lot – dinner time.”

At least his dogs are far happier about that prospect.

The girls don’t come down for breakfast the next day, even though Will makes pancakes and bacon and eggs, hoping to tempt them down with delicious smells. So Will loads up a tray and delivers it, only to find that the door is barred shut, likely with a chair wedged under the knob since it doesn’t actually have a bolt. He knocks once, announces the breakfast, and then leaves it outside. Then he heads downstairs to handle his pack.

This pattern continues for lunch and dinner, although he does hear – or, rather, see his dogs hear – the soft pitter-patter of the girls venturing outside to bring the tray in and out, and to use the bathroom.

Will doesn’t bother them. It’s probably a bit messed up to treat them like he treats new additions to his pack, but he figures it might be worse to overwhelm them, especially since he let his supply of scent blocker lapse when he quit his job. After all, his dogs didn’t care

whether he smelled like alpha or beta. But these girls – omegas raised by an omega – they might care.

The girls still don't come down the following day, so Will shrugs and delivers breakfast and then heads out to grab an engine from his barn. Until he can make it to the bank, the FBI stipend is kind of useless to them, so side jobs it is.

Will has a screwdriver in between his teeth, a part in one hand, and another groping on the carpet for the other part when one of his dogs whuffs softly.

"What are you doing?" says one of the girls. By scent, she smells a bit like lavender – the more assertive sister.

Will hesitates, and then he spits out the screwdriver. "I'm fixing a boat engine.

"Why? The angry man said you were paid to care for us."

"And I'll put that money to good use for whatever you two need or want. But that means I still money for what I need and want. I also buy a lot of meat for dog food."

The girl sinks down to the carpet. She's at least changed, so she must have dug into the suitcases of clothes, and she has a bright red ribbon tied into her hair. It's neat, not ragged or crooked, so Will guesses the sisters helped each other dress. The bonus of not being an only child, he guesses.

"Why don't you just buy dog food?" she asks, stroking Teddy from his head to his spine. "Wouldn't that be easier?"

"All of my dogs are rescues. Some of them have different nutritional requirements. And I like to know what exactly I am putting in their bowls. Manufacturers like to hide bad or filler ingredients in. Plus, every once in a while there's a recall because of glass or plastic mixed in, or something's been tainted. I just . . . find it easier to buy in bulk and make it."

The girl looks at him, considering, but then she nods, accepting his words. She strokes Teddy again. "Our Papa liked to know what exactly he was feeding us. He said he only went to the best butcher for our food."

"Parents always want what's best for their child."

"Papa said you can't always get what you want."

"Words to live by," Will mutters. "I mean. Nothing against your Papa. But life is unfair. It throws you curveballs you didn't expect. And you just sorta . . . learn to live with it."

"Is being arrested a curveball?"

Will picks his screwdriver back up. "If I ever get arrested, I'll let you know."

He must pass some sort of test, because that night, he is awakened by the clicking of nails on the tile and opens his eyes to find the other sister, the softer voiced one by her citrus scent, standing in the doorway, glass of milk in one hand and the door frame clutched in the other. She stares at him, eyes large and luminous in the dark, and her scent is neither alarmed nor repulsed. In fact, she actually tilts the glass towards him, allowing him to see that it is empty.

“Do you need something?” Will asks quietly.

“Papa says warm milk can help you fall asleep,” the girl says. “I can’t sleep, but Abby fell asleep ages ago.”

Will isn’t a fool; he’s aware that this is more a test than a demonstration of trust. It shouldn’t really tug at him too much, given that he’s well aware that these are not his children, just children that have been entrusted to him for temporary care. And yet, he finds himself rising, his inner alpha worried at the notion that his children are in need and he hasn’t provided, and he takes the glass and pads barefoot in the kitchen, shooing away curious and sleep dogs to get the milk, pour some in, and stick it into the microwave.

Gael pulls herself into a chair and stares at him some more.

Will averts his eyes and looks at the ground. His gift works on children and adults alike, and while Jack might want him to crawl into the mind of the twins, he isn’t so eager. Unlike an adult, he doubts Gael or Abby would truly understand just what he could do.

The microwave beeps, but softly, because Will got annoyed with it one day when it set off the dogs with its shrill shrieking and went and bought a quieter one, and Will takes out the milk and slides it towards Gael.

She accepts it, but she doesn’t drink from it. She seems more interested in staring at Will.

“The angry man said Papa was a bad man,” Gael says suddenly, “and we might never see him again.” Her lip trembles. “We didn’t even get to say good-bye.”

Will crouches on the ground, not quite meeting her eye but at least no longer towering over her. “I’m sure you’ll see him again. After the trial, at least. Maybe even before it. No one wants to separate children from their sire or dam without a proper good-bye.”

“But Papa was a bad man.”

“Hmm. Did he ever hit you?”

Gael shakes her head mutely.

“Starve you?”

“Nuh-uh.”

“Leave you alone in the house for hours at end?”

“If Papa wasn’t there, Nanny was.”

Will nods slowly. “Okay. So whatever he might be as a person, he wasn’t a bad papa. I think you should remember that. It’s important.”

She peers at him. “Do you think Papa was a bad person?”

“Honestly? I don’t know. Your papa might be completely innocent. Even angry men with badges can make mistakes.”

Gael hums thoughtfully, and then she tips her glass towards her mouth, draining the milk in steady long pulls. After a few moments, she’s down, wiping her mouth off and handing Will the glass. Then she hops off the chair and scampers upstairs with nary a backwards glance.

Will shrugs and goes back to bed.

Those two conversations seem to break a barrier between the twins and Will. They’re certainly not loud or rambunctious children, but they come down to share meals with Will, or sit on the sofa and watch as he tinkers with engines, or even come along on walks with his pack. The dogs adore having more people to chase and play fetch with, and with so many eyes focused on Gael and Abby, Will feels like he can relax and enjoy the moment.

Of course, this atmosphere is ruined two weeks later when Jack appears at the crack of dawn to bang on Will’s door and yell his name.

The twins – who had fallen asleep on the sofa after watching a movie marathon on Will’s TV – sit bolt upright. The blanket Will had gently tucked around them falls to the floor as Abby tugs on Gael’s hand, and Will sees them both running upstairs, presumably to the bedroom, as Will blearily stomps to the front door. He’d blame his tiredness on staying up late with the twins, but honestly, he’d had a really good sleep; nothing can lull an alpha to a better sleep than the comforting scents of relaxed and happy omegas.

Jack is actually still banging on Will’s door, so when Will opens it he nearly gets a fist to the face.

“What,” Will grunts.

“I need you to come with me.”

Will rubs at his eyes. “It isn’t even 6 AM, Jack. And you said you caught the Ripper. What on earth could possibly have happened that you need me? You have an entire bureau.”

“No one who does what you do you.”

“You have Bloom and Heimlich. They’re excellent. And they can socialize!”

“I don’t need you to socialize,” Jack growls, “I need you to talk to Dr. Lecter.”

Will has to rewind and replay that sentence a couple times in his head before the meaning settles in. When it does, he rewinds it one more time, just to be sure, and then he looks over

at the sofa where the blanket the twins slept under and their dirty dishes are still piled are just to make sure this isn't a hallucination where he doesn't have other people in his house.

Will looks back at Jack. "You can't be serious. I have the girls."

"I brought other agents, and they can play babysitter. Right now, I need you to talk to Dr. Lecter and get me some proof."

"You arrested him without proof?"

"More proof," Jack amends grumpily. "His shark of a lawyer got the wiretap thrown out, and I have a drawing of the Wound Man, but he's a doctor so it isn't that out of place. My only link is that he was the attending on schedule for the first Ripper victim. I need more proof."

"I thought the newspaper said you got some meat?"

"Further testing revealed it was just beef. High quality beef, but not human." Jack shifts in place. "Look, you were right about the Ripper being an omega – don't you want to come make sure?"

Will snorts. "You just want me to come so *you* can make sure," he retorts. "But fine. Give me five minutes. And make sure your agent doesn't lose any of my dogs."

Then he slams the door in Jack's face. Because it is 6 AM and Will is most unequivocally not a morning person at all.

Will gets dressed, pours some food for the dogs, and calls up to the twins that he's leaving so they aren't left wondering what's going on. One or two of the dogs even scramble up the stairs to probably cuddle with the twins, so Will is happy to leave it at that before he hears the pitter patter of foosteps and sees Abby's face around the stairwell.

"Yes?"

"Can you tell Papa that we miss him?"

"Yeah. Sure."

"Papa worries. If he asks, tell him we like you and you're treating us well. You're very polite."

"Uh," Will says. "Sure? Hopefully I'll be back for lunch and we can go fishing, okay?"

"Okay."

Hannibal Lecter is brought into the interrogation room in the most ostentatious way that Will's ever seen. Firstly, he is wheeled in on something similar to a hand truck instead of being allowed to walk or sit in a chair. Secondly, he has a straitjacket on, with straps wrapped round his legs too. Thirdly, he has a mask on, clear plastic lining the bottom half of his face

with only a few small holes for airflow. Finally, his straightjacket and mask are attached to the hand truck by Velcro straps, so he can't so much as twitch.

Will stares through the two-way mirror, mouth agape. "Isn't that a bit much?"

"The Ripper has killed dozens of people and eaten them," Jack says coolly.

". . . Right," Will says.

"You have five minutes. Get in there."

When Will sits down in front of Lecter, he can practically the way the hair on the back of his neck stands up. Even if Lecter wasn't a killer, his laser focus onto Will is like being examined under an enormous magnifying glass, with no shadows to hide in or desks to duck under. He can't shake the impression that Lecter wants to see how he ticks.

"Hello, Dr. Lecter."

"Good morning," Lecter replies, voice slightly muffled by the mask. "I assume dear Uncle Jack has a few more questions for me?"

Will pauses. "Uncle?"

"That is how my girls refer to him. He used to babysit. Did he show you the photos? It's quite beautiful."

"I, uh, I'll ask him later."

Lecter tilts his head, ever so slightly. The mask creaks as he inhales. "Or perhaps you wouldn't need to. So. They gave my girls to an alpha agent. How . . . pedestrian."

"I'm a teacher," Will corrects. "I quit."

"Oh? Dear Uncle Jack drive you away?"

"I told him the profile was wrong. Instead of looking for an alpha, we should've been focusing on omegas. Jack disagreed, so I quit."

"And now you hope you're correct?"

Will opens the folder and begins to lay out photos. They're crime scene photos, glossy and harsh, and Will has to swallow down the urge to step into each and pry out the secrets hiding in each victim's eyes. There are just so many, though, so it takes Will a good few moments to lay out the bulk of the case.

"Recognize any of them?" Will asks neutrally.

"Perhaps. Perhaps not. I was a doctor, after all. And laws would prevent me from disclosing such relationships." Lecter's smile is so, so sharp behind his mask. "Wouldn't someone like you be able to find out?"

“I am. I’m asking you.”

“Not like this. By demanding records and questioning witnesses. I’m sure you could put together any narrative you wish.”

Will changes tracks. “What if the witnesses were your daughters?”

The temperature in the room drops rapidly; Lecter’s expression hardly changes, but within seconds Will has a glimpse of the primal omega instead, the omega who kidnapped people and tore out their throats and cooked their organs, the omega that Will so desperately argued was responsible. Like this, Will can definitely see Lecter as having the sheer strength of will and force of personality to be the Ripper.

“Do not,” Lecter says softly, “involve my children. Their sire thought she knew best too, once. But you may note that I have custody.”

Will inclines his head. The point is easily understood; usually courts assign children to the alpha, yet here is Lecter, an unmarried and single omega, who persuaded a court to hand over custody. And omegas have been capable of brutal things in self-defense, or defense of their children. He has no wish to tempt Lecter to try and escape his restraints.

“They’re safe. I promise. Abby said to tell you they were fine.”

“Did she now?”

“I left them with my dogs. They seemed to like them.”

Lecter’s expression eases ever so slightly. He doesn’t move at all, but Will gets the sense of a spring, slowly uncoiling from its twisted tension. “Abby has been rather eager for a pet. I suppose I should thank you. But I’m curious: just what do my girls think of you, I wonder. Their sire left quite early; you are the first alpha they’ve been in extended contact with.”

Will raises an eyebrow. “Are you attempting to flatter me?”

“Hardly. Your cologne is quite subpar, and it poisons your scent.”

“Well, Abby said she thought I was treating them well, and that I was polite. And she misses you.”

Lecter softens even more, sagging against the straps until they begin to groan. The guards stiffen, but Lecter does nothing, and Will waves them off. It’s unreasonable, after all, to expect a parent to be separated from their children and not be hungry for any updates – and relieved when they are safe. After all, if Lecter can smell Will’s scent under his cologne, which was purchased specifically to stop that, he can surely smell that the girls’ scents on Will are calm and not distressed.

“I miss them as well,” Lecter says quietly. “Soon I shall be with them.”

“So confident you’ll be found innocent?”

“If you had evidence, the trial would be over already,” Lecter points out. “No. You have suppositions and suspicions and stories. Nothing more.”

One of the guards signals; Will’s five minutes are almost up.

So Will takes a deep breath, and looks up, and forces himself to make eye contact. It’s like stepping into a mirror, or falling down a hole into Wonderland; Lecter’s thoughts are so strange and unique next to a normal human’s, yet to him and his world, they are perfectly normal. If the Queen of Hearts found no strangeness in ordering hapless victims’ heads cut off, Lecter finds no strangeness in snuffing out the lives of those he deems guilty, as judge, jury, and executioner. If the March Hare and the Hatter and Dormouse did not find it strange to have an endless tea party, then Lecter does not it strange to dance in endless circles around the FBI. Lecter know who and what he is, and woe betide those who have not also answered such an essential question of life – or worse, those who take out their frustrations about the answer unjustly upon others.

Lecter smiles. “And just what buried secrets are you looking for inside my eyes, Agent Graham?”

“Whatever I can find,” Will says, fighting to keep his voice calm.

“You may find some doors harder to open than others. If, indeed, you can even find the door.”

“Five minutes are up,” interrupts the guard. “We’re done here.”

They wheel Lecter out, and Will focuses hard on the table in front of him, breathing in and out as shallowly as he can. It’s always strange to slip out of someone else’s skin, and not because Will feels like an alien in someone else’s shoes. Instead, he ends up feeling like an alien in his.

Jack marches inside. “What did you get?”

Will swallows hard. He pushes down the siren song of Lecter’s skin and soul – confident and calm and deep as the ocean itself – and tries to voice the thoughts that he knows now are as true as the color of the sky. “Did you search his entire house?”

“Yeah, obviously. We got nothing.”

“You missed something.”

“Like what?”

“Buried secrets,” Will echoes. “He’s got a basement.”

The agent Will relieves is eager to leave, so eager that she barely says a word to Will as she grabs her bag, hands over the keys, and darts for the door. It’s a good thing; Will honestly has no idea he could possibly say to her. Thankfully, his dogs ask no questions and make no

demands. They just swarm him, snuffling and barking and licking, and Will spends a good ten minutes on the floor with them, breathing in happy dog.

Then he rises, and takes off his coat, and heads upstairs.

The girls are fast asleep in their bedroom, curled around each other like kittens. Teddy and Buster slip past Will and pad into the room, obviously intent on sleeping besides them.

It's a nice sight. It helps. A little bit, anyways.

So Will closes the door. He can always tell the girls tomorrow about the secrets they found when they pried up the door to the hidden basement in their home.

Abby and Gael are sleepy over breakfast, so to stall any questions, Will offers to take them out. "There's a cinema showing some movies. They have some great popcorn. Interested?"

The girls are more than thrilled. Will bundles them into the car, and they set off for town, with the girls chattering in the backseat and Will trying desperately to think of a way to break the news that their father is indeed a cannibalistic serial killer.

This is probably why he misses the sight of a dog running on the side of the road, but Abby and Gael don't.

"A dog!" Gale shrieks. "Doggy!"

Will slams on the brakes on instinct. The dog is wary, with a knotted rope around its neck and dirt all over its body, and it keeps its body and tail hunched low when Will clicks his tongue. When he steps out of the car, it takes off running, clearly spooked.

Will looks at the girls. Abby and Gael look at him.

"Please?" Abby asks.

Will sighs.

One trip to the grocery store later, and Abby and Gael are perched in the open trunk, luring the dog to them with hot dogs. It takes a bit of time, especially since at first the girls have no idea what to do, and Will has to show them how to make their posture smaller and less threatening so that the dog will approach. Finally, though, they lure him into the trunk.

"We'll call him Winston," Abby announces after consulting with Gael.

"A good name," Will says, smiling. "But I think our outing to the cinema is cancelled."

Fortunately, the girls are too busy exclaiming over Winston to mind. Will drives them back home, although he slows down when he sees a truck idling in the driveway. Will parks at the edge of the road instead and locks the doors.

"Stay here," he says. "I'll be back."

The truck's door opens when Will approaches, and a man dressed in a postal worker's uniform steps out. He has a bulky box under one and a clipboard in the other.

"Got a package for you. You gotta sign."

"I didn't order anything."

"You Will Graham?"

"Yeah."

"Then it's yours. Sign here."

Will does so, hopeful that it's something from Jack or the FBI and not more stalker letters. The postal worker hands over the package, clearly relieved, and then drives off without a backwards glance. The package is express overnight delivery too, so Will frowns and vows to investigate later.

Of course, in between settling Winston in and giving him a bath and locating an extra dog bed, Will forgets all about the package.

At least, until it starts ringing.

Will sighs and gets up and tears the package open. The return address is from some prestigious law firm, which Will doesn't think the FBI uses, but at least it tells him it likely isn't a stalker again. When he finally rips out the packaging, he finds a cellphone. Brand new and top of the line, shiny and expensive, and vibrating with an incoming call.

Will picks up.

"Hello, Agent Graham."

Will nearly drops the phone out of shock. "Dr. Lecter?"

"You're a hard man to find. I do appreciate the care you are showing to my children though. Consider this a token of my gratitude."

"I don't – "

"May I please speak to my children?"

"How did you even get a phone?"

"If the FBI could not locate my workshop in my own house, what makes you think they could locate a bank account in another country?" Lecter asks, sounding highly amused. "Well done on finding the key, by the way. I am impressed."

There's a tug on Will's shirt, and he looks down to see Gael standing there.

Will sighs. "Here's your daughter," he says, and hands over the phone.

Lecter doesn't spend much time with his daughters. Either he has a short amount of time unsupervised, or more likely he doesn't want to risk Will overhearing something important. Whatever the reason, only ten minutes later, Abby approaches with the phone in hand, tears glistening on her face.

"Papa wants to speak to you," she says, voice trembling, and then she darts away.

"What do you want?"

"I underestimated you," Lecter says thoughtfully. "You saw something, when you looked into my eyes. Most do not."

"Omegas are easy to underestimate."

"Indeed we are, but in some ways it is even harder to underestimate an alpha. I thought you felt drawn to my children because you were an unmated alpha, but that's not it, is it? You empathized with them. Pure empathy, to dive into the mind of child and adult alike."

"More like an active imagination."

"Very interesting. Pity we didn't meet before all of this, Agent Graham. I think we could have had some wonderful conversations over dinner."

"I doubt it. I don't find you very interesting."

Lecter laughs very quietly. "You are a far better seer than a liar. If you didn't find me interesting, you wouldn't still be talking to me. Ah, but I must be going. Take care of yourself. And my daughters, of course."

Then the phone goes dead, as abruptly as it had rung.

Will groans and calls Jack, who is absolutely furious when he hears what happened.

"That bastard stands trial tomorrow," Jack seethes. "He's not getting away from us again, and he sure as hell isn't going to be using you or his daughters to get out of jail. I'm sending a protective detail."

"I don't think that's necessary."

"Well, I do. And since I'm not the one who answered a phone call from a serial killer, I think we'll go with my judgement call."

Will wakes up the next morning to find the detail sitting on his doorstep. Almost literally; the car is parked right in front of his porch, ensuring that no one can enter through the door without the officers knowing. Will waves hi as he lets the dogs out, receiving polite nods from the two officers inside, and then he starts cooking breakfast.

He has just finished plating and goes to the stairway to call down Abby and Gael when he notices that one of car doors is open. Frowning, he walks over, and that's when he sees the

officer splayed on the porch, face frozen in shock, neck twisted at an angle.

Will curses and runs for the stairs.

“Abby!” he yells. “Gael! Barricade yourself in and call – ”

A hand slaps over his mouth, cutting off his shouts. The hand is surprisingly soft, which Will belatedly realizes is because the hand is gripping a cloth drenched in chloroform. Will kicks out blindly, but the person’s other arm winds around him, clenching so tightly that Will feels his toes leave the floor. The person is unbelievably strong; Will struggles and kicks to no avail, lungs burning as he tries not to give into the temptation to breathe. Through streaming eyes, he glimpses two figures at the top of the stair; they aren’t alarmed at all, and Will can just about make up the way their mouths curve upwards in a smile.

Smiles of recognition and joy.

“Hello again, Agent Graham,” Hannibal Lecter purrs into his ear. “I think it’s about time we had that dinner.”

Will slurs out a curse and passes out.

When Will wakes up, his full body flinch causes an odd groan underneath him. After a moment of wildly looking around, he realizes that it’s because he’s bound to an old wooden chair. It’s study as hell; when Will wriggles, he can move the chair a centimeter or two, but that’s it. He’s bound almost as thoroughly as Lecter was, with straps binding his arms, legs, chest, and shoulders to the chair.

Will swears.

“I do hope you aren’t talking that way around my daughters.”

Will tenses, causing yet another groan from the protesting chair. “If you’re going to eat me, get it over with.”

“Eat you?” Lecter echoes. He steps around from behind Will into the light, dressed so immaculately it’s hard to believe that only a few days ago he was in a prison jumpsuit. He even has a matching tie and pocket square. “Why would I do that?”

“You eat people.”

“I eat pigs. There’s a difference.”

Will pulls away when Lecter approaches, but that makes the world spin wildly, like Will’s on a roller-coaster out of control. He can’t help the way he snarls, a warning to keep away. “What did you do to me?”

“The drugs? They’ll wear off soon. I just wanted to have the pleasure of your company for dinner.”

“I’m bad company even when I’m not drugged and have a throbbing headache.”

“I think you’re putting yourself down,” Lecter chides. “I think you are excellent company. My girls, certainly, find you very polite. You even let them rescue a dog.”

“Dogs are better than people.”

Lecter laughs, and then he uncovers a bowl on the table with a flourish. Steam rises up from the smooth surface of the soup inside, although Will can’t quite angle his neck to get a good look at the contents. He tenses again when Lecter dips a spoon inside and raises it to his lips, but when Lecter grips the back of his head, it’s either open and swallow or burn his mouth, so Will lets himself be fed.

He can’t help the shudder when Lecter’s hand pulls away. “Soup’s not very good,” he says, trying to maintain his composure and not follow the siren song of a fertile omega.

Lecter looks chagrined. “I’m afraid I don’t have most of my supplies. This was the best I could do.”

Will’s stomach roils. “I think I’m gonna be sick.”

Lecter frowns, rising to his feet. This time, when he places his hand against Will’s forehead, it’s a relief, a cool balm against the fire. Although when Will opens his eyes, not having realized he closed them, he finds the world out of focus and blurry.

“More drugs?” he says, or tries to.

“This should not be affecting you so much,” Lecter murmurs. “A healthy alpha can throw off an even higher dose. I wonder . . .”

Lecter leans close, putting his nose straight to Will’s neck like they’re courting or something, and inhales deeply. When he leans back, every his blurry face looks concerned. He sets one hand against Will’s forehead again, and then cups his neck with his other, measuring Will’s pulse as intently as though he’s memorizing it.

“Will, this is very important. I believe you need treatment for encephalitis. It is very important that you say to Jack when he arrives. Do you understand?”

“What?”

Lecter pulls out a phone. He taps a few things on it, and then lays it on the table.

“In five minutes, it will dial for emergency services. I have enabled the GPS. Please request treatment. A brain scan should confirm my diagnosis. It is treatable; you need not worry. But this should be done sooner rather than later.”

“What – why you are doing this?”

Lecter smiles. “Friends take care of each other, don’t they?”

And then he's gone.

If Jack was beside himself when Will told him Lecter called and spoke to his daughters, he's downright apoplectic when he gets to the scene – one of Lecter's properties under an alias the FBI was not aware of, apparently – and finds Will but no Lecter, no daughters, and no evidence as to where or how they fled the scene before the EMTs managed to trace Will's phone and arrive on scene.

After about five minutes of yelling, Will gets up and starts talking towards the ambulance.

"WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?" Jack roars.

Will stops. "To get my brain scanned, apparently."

"Absolutely not. We need to find Lecter after *you* let him get away! Get back here and tell us where he went."

Will turns around, suddenly as tired as he had been on the day he quit. He'd almost forgotten why, but now it all comes rushing back. "No," Will says. "No, I won't. I am checking myself into the hospital and getting my brain scanned and then undergoing treatment for possible encephalitis. Because apparently Hannibal goddamn Lecter cares more for my health than you. Find Lecter on your own. I'm sure he won't be able to resist contacting you."

Jack continues shouting after that, but Will just keeps putting one foot in front of the other, and the EMTs are more than happy to put him on a stretcher and drive away once they hear the possible diagnosis.

One MRI later, and the diagnosis is confirmed.

"It's definitely encephalitis," the doctor says. "But it is treatable, Mr. Graham. Don't worry. How did you find out?"

". . . A friend," Will answers. "He uh. He smelled it."

The doctor smiles. "Impressive. Well, he just might have saved your life. He's a good friend."

"Yeah. Yeah, he is."

No one comes to see him during his treatment. On the bright side, it's nice to have Jack-free days, although Will does turn on the TV and see the chaos as the result of Lecter's escape. His nurses discuss it too; from them, Will learns that Lecter apparently faked a heart attack, and then attacked the orderlies en route to the infirmary, stole some keys and a uniform, and escaped. A simple and effective plan. He is informed that everyone is looking for Lecter, although all signs point to Europe – Italy, perhaps, or France. Or even Lecter's native Lithuania.

Will says nothing.

He continues to say nothing when one day his nurse comes in, beaming, to present him with a bouquet of flowers, all carefully chosen not to aggravate anyone's nose or allergies.

"Who's it from?" Will asks.

His nurse clucks her tongue. "Hmm, a lady named Joy? No. Two ladies named Joy. Twins. How adorable. And these flowers are just gorgeous. You're a lucky alpha, Mr. Graham."

Will turns the card over in his hands. There isn't much on it, besides two signatures spelling out the name of Joy and a different, more confident handwriting spelling out Will's name and address, but the card itself is from Havana, Cuba, a standard touristy photograph of the beach and setting sun and the words *Get well soon* laid across the image.

It's the only card Will gets during his treatment.

Will is discharged at the end of his treatment. Nobody comes to pick him up, with is fine with Will; he doesn't want to see Jack or anyone else. The card is burning a hole in his pocket as he hops in a cab and heads home, but Will holds onto it as he pays and walks slowly up the steps to his home.

His house is dark and quiet; Will's dogs are enjoying his neighbor's farm. All that is left is dusty bowls and an empty house.

Well. Mostly dusty bowls.

Will frowns as he sees one bowl, brand new and so clean it shines. It has a small amount of dog food inside, and fresh dog food at that. When he crouches to squint at it, he sees elegant letters spelling out *Winston* on it.

And Will smiles. Without even looking behind him, he inhales, mouth watering at the scent of omega. "Hello, Hannibal."

"Hello, Will."

"Are you going to chloroform me again?"

"I would not inflict that upon you in your delicate state. I was rather hoping to finish our conversation, actually."

"And what was left to talk about?"

"Quite a good deal. Have you ever been to Cuba, Will?"

"Can't say I have."

"You might find it an excellent place to rest and rejuvenate. Why don't we discuss it over dinner? I promise you that the soup is much better this time."

Will pushes himself to his feet, mindful of his still sore and weakened body. Hannibal is standing in the doorway, dressed once again to the nines, but this time he has Winston panting by his side, handsomely groomed and attired with a matching bow tie. When Will inhales again, he can pick out the delicious scents of food from his kitchen.

“Sure,” Will says. “It’s always nice to have an old friend for dinner.”

FINIS

Chapter End Notes

A/N: And then Hannibal "kidnaps" Will again, and they go off and get married and have a nice time traveling the world. Will finds it downright hilarious that the list of Hannibal's crimes on the Most Wanted List include "corrupting upstanding alpha Agent Graham". After the birth of their daughter, Hannibal personally calls Jack to notify him that he is now a godfather, and Jack nearly starts yelling until he hears Will and the baby cooing at each other in the background. Life goes on, and Hannibal and Will remain uncaught.

Also, I am terrible with names. That's why I almost never actually reveal a baby name when one is born in my fics. Thus, Hannibal's twins' names are just Abigail split into two. And for those who are curious, the FBI eventually does catch up with Bedelia and she pulls the "oooh I'm drugged" routine again. She and Hannibal originally bonded as a mutual way to be taken off the market and climb the social circle, but she got scared when she realized their daughters were taking a little too much after Hannibal and she ran away.

Hint for Day 10: It involves the amnesia trope. Stay tuned for the reveal in two days!

Snow - Beta!Will & Alpha!Hannibal

Chapter Summary

> Will Graham wakes up from a plane crash with a splitting headache and no memories of why he was on said plane. Thankfully, the good Dr. Lecter - the only other survivor - is more than happy to help.

Chapter Notes

> Warnings: blatant inaccuracies about memory loss and memory retrieval
>
> Inspired by: I've always wanted to do the amnesia trope. Sue me.
>
> Dynamics: Beta!Will & Alpha!Hannibal

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will first becomes aware of the sound, mostly because it echoes and bounces like an echo.

Drip.

Drip.

Drip.

Then Will becomes aware of the blinding light, mostly because he opens his eyes and immediately regrets it.

Drip.

Drip.

Drip.

Finally Will becomes aware of the cold, swallowing his feet and consuming his arms and venturing tentative nibbles at his chest.

Drip.

Drip.

Drip.

Will takes a deep breath. The inhale hurts, a dull and throbbing ache, because of the icy hair piercing his lungs, but Will also become aware of something heavy and hard on his chest, pressing down. It's not that much heavier than one of his dogs, but with the cold leeching his strength and the blinding light draining his resolve, Will lays there for several more moments before he can muster the willpower to open his eyes again.

When his vision settles, he finds that it is indeed not one of his dogs weighing down his torso; it is a very heavy oblong shaped object, dull and grey with a single white stripe. It smells of ash and wiring, not unlike an engine, and the edges are sharp and jagged, like it was torn free from something else.

Will also finds out why he is cold – he is surrounded by snow. Snow is the hard packed blanket under his back, snow is the soft dusting on top of the object weighing him down, and snow is the reason why everything appears so bright.

For a moment, Will wonders if he perhaps wandered away in his sleep again, but another inhale disproves that theory, for the air is cold and thin, and he certainly doesn't live near any mountains.

He pushes at the object, but it is heavy and Will's limbs are shaking, so it only shifts a centimeter even after his most ardent efforts. Will lays back down and shivers against the snow. He tries to scratch at the snow beneath him to make a depression so he has more room to wriggle away, but his fingers quickly grow numb, so Will abandons the effort. He tries to push again, but the weight simply shifts further down his chest instead of falling off of him. Finally, as a last ditch effort, Will tries to call out.

Unfortunately, his voice appears as weak as his limbs. His yells come out as croaky whispers, lost in the whipping wind and absorbed by the snow.

Will closes his eyes.

Drip.

Drip.

Drip.

The sun begins to set, alleviating the blinding reflection on the snow. But as the sun's rays move away, they also take their warmth, and Will begins to shiver. It doesn't do much besides pack the snow in harder behind him and raise bruises against his skin, but as the minutes or hours go by, Will's varied limbs go silent as his teeth clack and chatter.

Drip.

Drip.

Drip.

Will musters his strength to push again. With his now deadened limbs, he doesn't have much more strength than before, so the object only moves a scant few inches before Will has to stop and wheeze for breath. At this rate, he knows, he'll freeze before he manages to push it off of him.

Drip.

Drip.

Crunch.

Drip.

Drip.

Crunch.

Drip.

Drip.

Crunch.

It takes several iterations for Will to realize that he isn't hallucinating – someone is walking around on the snow. It's a slow pace, as if they too are weighed down by cold and exhaustion, but it's more movement than Will is making. He forces his eyes open, taking in the last vestiges of sunlight, and looks about until he catches sight of the dark roving figure below. It shuffles about on the snow, shrinking and growing, which Will realizes is because it is kneeling or crouching to check something in the snow.

Will inhales. The icy bite barely registers now, because Will is more icicle than human now, but the lungful of air allows him to expel a weak warbling cry.

The figure notices; Will can see how it goes still and then suddenly rises and begins to get larger.

"Help," Will croaks again.

Crunch, crunch, crunch.

The footsteps get louder and louder as Will continues to blink and breathe, until quite suddenly the dark blurry figure turns into a man clad in dark clothing, with flushed cheeks and windswept hair. He isn't wearing very sensible snow clothing either, but the way he slides to his knees besides Will is reassuring, if only because Will won't die alone now.

"Are you hurt?" the man asks, voice startlingly loud after so much time hearing only the whistle of the wind and drip of the melting snow.

Will licks at his lips. "I don't – I don't know. I can't get this off me."

“Stay still. Let me handle it.”

So saying, the man places his hands against the object. Either he is much stronger than he appears or Will is just that dazed, but the man grunts and shoves once, twice, and with a third final push gets the object sliding off of Will and onto the snow beside him. Then he very gently reaches for Will’s shoulder and helps him sit up, which is when Will gets a good whiff of him and realizes that he is an alpha, which explains his strength.

“Are you hurt?” the man asks again.

Will tries to feel down his numbed legs, which is when his range of motion is abruptly cut off. Looking down, Will has to snort; he may not have sleepwalked, but apparently even awake he isn’t his smartest.

“I put on my coat backwards,” he mutters. “Can you – Thank you.”

The man wordlessly helps him rearrange his coat so that it opens at the front and protects his back again. Then he asks again, “Are you hurt?”

Will eyes him from the corner of his eyes. The man is almost hovering over him, very solicitous, like a dog waiting to gobble up a treat the second Will lets a scrap fall while cooking. He is very concerned about Will, too; every inch of him screams anxiety and curiosity, all focused straight on Will.

“I don’t think so,” Will finally answers. “I um. How did we get up here?”

When the man cocks his head, looking slightly puzzled, Will realizes he must be missing more than one puzzle piece.

“I thought I sleepwalked, but I don’t live near mountains. Did – I don’t know how much I’ve forgotten. Do we know each other? Did Jack drag us somewhere?”

The man’s brow furrows, and he goes very still. It’s almost disconcerting how still he goes, like a video ending on a still image. It gets even worse when that anxiety drains away, a mask sliding over the man’s face the same way a grate lowers down to close a window. The man very carefully pulls his hands back and places them on his lap.

“Do you know who you are, Will?”

Will exhales in relief. “Yeah. I’m Will Graham. I, uh, I work for the FBI. Special . . . consultant.”

“Dr. Hannibal Lecter. I also consult with the FBI, although more recently than you.”

“Ah.” Will wrinkles his nose as he realizes why the mask. “Psychiatrist?”

“Not found of my profession?”

“I’ve had a few run ins with your kind,” Will says. “Just try not to psychoanalyze me. That doesn’t end well.”

“For me or for you?” Dr. Lecter says, but he does smile, so at least he isn’t offended by Will’s jab. “In any case, I suppose asking if you remember how we got here would be a moot question?”

“Yeah.”

“Hmm. In that case, I think we shall have to settle for you knowing your name and being able to process basic questions. A more thorough examination may have to wait until we can find shelter. Shall we?”

Will accepts the hand Dr. Lecter holds out. Thank god for alpha strength; Will nearly staggers and face plants when Dr. Lecter pulls him to his feet, and he has to steady Will again with a hand on his waist. Fortunately, though, he says nothing, so he’s either used to Will being a klutz or he’s just very polite. Or both.

Will casts about. With the sun sinking steadily downwards, he can’t make out much. “Where do you think we can find shelter?”

Dr. Lecter hums. “We are very high up on this mountain. I would suggest we head downwards, in order to see if we can find a town nearby. At the very least, it will be easier to breathe.”

And, well, it’s not like Will has any other suggestions, so he just agrees.

When they stumble upon a cabin only about half an hour later, Will has to rub his eyes twice. It’s not a big cabin, but there is a nice pile of wood leaning against one wall, it is clean and clearly maintained, and, most exciting of all, a large water tank. It is locked, of course, but Dr. Lecter rummages around the steps and comes up with what appears to be a spare key.

“You should play the lottery,” Will comments as Dr. Lecter puts the key in.

Dr. Lecter smiles again. “I already have everything I desire from fate, but the suggestion is noted. Come, let’s warm up.”

Inside they find a very nice, if slightly dusty, set of three rooms: a small bedroom, filled almost wall to wall with a big bed and a pile of thick blankets; a storage room filled with more wood, a can of gas, and some matches; and a kitchen with a tiny table and cabinets filled with canned food and candles. There is no shower, but Will does glimpse a tub, not at all large or fancy, but sturdy and sizeable enough for a grown man to sit down comfortably with his legs bent. Most importantly, a stove graces the center of the cabin, and it is in very good condition. All in all, Will reflects, basically a jackpot to keep them from dying from cold or hunger or thirst.

Dr. Lecter seems to come to a similar conclusion after rummaging through the cabinets. “There are adequate supplies to sustain us here,” he notes. “I suggest you take a warm bath. Not hot; warm. Slowly warm up your core temperature.”

“Shouldn’t you go first?”

“You were unconscious for longer,” Dr. Lecter says pointedly. “In the meantime, I will go back and see if there are any supplies I can find. We do not know how long we will be stranded.”

Will glances out the window. The sun is almost completely gone, now; Will couldn’t honestly tell which way they had come from. “How are you planning to find your way back? Shouldn’t that wait until morning?”

“By morning fresh snow may cover our tracks. It cannot wait. And besides, the smell of smoke is very strong. I will use that as a guide.”

On one hand, it makes sense – alphas have heightened senses and heightened strength, so whereas Will might be lost in the snow, Dr. Lecter should have no problem scenting his way back and powering through the snow. Yet betas are prone to wanting pack just like alphas and omegas, so Will’s instincts clamor at him to keep Dr. Lecter close.

“Dr. Lecter,” Will says, before he can stop himself.

Dr. Lecter pauses with one hand on the door. He looks completely unruffled by the cold, which is impressive. “Yes, Will?”

It’s very strange – he feels like he should say something, but he has no idea what. But there is something buried deep inside of him, something straining towards Dr. Lecter, something that drives him to take a deep breath and release the words yearning to be free.

“ . . . Be careful,” Will says.

They are the right words to say, apparently. Dr. Lecter smiles, quick and sharp, like a fox that’s caught the scent of a mouse. “I always am,” he says, and steps outside.

It takes Will several long moments to struggle out of his wet clothes. He drapes them on top of one of the chairs and drags it over to the stove, which he then loads up with wood and scraps of paper before alighting with a match. That done, he slowly and laboriously fills the tub with hot water, but on the bright side it takes so long that it’s cooled down a little by the time he can finally slide in.

It’s only lukewarm, but Will still winces, because it feels boiling hot. It is, he realizes, why Dr. Lecter warned him not to use boiling water.

Will scrubs at his skin, wiping away dirt and other things he’s not quite sure about. It’s a relief to be warm and wet instead of cold and wet, and Will actually almost dozes off in between languid wipes along his skin, to the point where Dr. Lecter’s return makes him lurch upright and splash some water over the edge.

Dr. Lecter is covered with a liberal dusting of snow, but he has a cooler in one hand and a first aid kit in the other, and he seems completely unbothered by Will’s nakedness.

“Er,” Will stammers.

Dr. Lecter sets down the cooler with a thump. It's small, more akin to a picnic basket than the kind of beer cooler Will's used to seeing, and colored a deep indigo blue. "It's okay, Will. I worked as an emergency room surgeon for many years. I assure you," he says, sounding amused, "I have seen a naked man before, although you are a fine specimen."

Will's cheeks grow hot, but he can't tell if it's from the water or the clear admiration in Dr. Lecter's tone. "I'll, uh, I'll just get out so you can have a turn," Will mumbles.

He's just about to haul himself when he feels a touch on the back of his neck. Will freezes.

"You are bleeding," Dr. Lecter murmurs, and his tone is so completely devoid of heat and full on into concern that it almost gives Will whiplash. "Please, sit back down. Let me see where the injury is."

"I'm not hurt anywhere – ow!"

"Please sit still, Will," Dr. Lecter chides.

Will subsides, sitting down with a thunk as the water splashes around him. It still feels strange, to be as naked as the day he was born in front of a relative stranger, but Dr. Lecter's hands are strong and sure as they do . . . well, whatever it is doctors do for head wounds, and Will slowly relaxes into the warmth of the water again. Besides, there's a surety in Dr. Lecter, something familiar and smooth, like a rock worn away by the tide into a familiar shape, as if Dr. Lecter has molded himself perfectly to Will.

"Did we know each other?" Will asks suddenly.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Before this. Did we know each other. Because you seem . . . I don't know."

"I apologize if I have been overly familiar," Dr. Lecter says. "I am a psychiatrist, and observing is what I do; I cannot shut it off. I surmised you might be more comfortable if I assumed a . . . personal touch."

An answer without being one. Will rolls his head, testing, when Dr. Lecter finishes and pulls his hands away, and then he turns his head to look Dr. Lecter in the eye.

"Did I know you before, Hannibal?"

The significance of his name is apparently not lost on him; Hannibal goes very still. He's quite a sight, with his hair windswept and cheeks still a bit colored from the cold and sleeves rolled up. Yet he is calm and composed, as though his hike through the snow had been a breezy stroll and not an arduous trek through snow.

"We were acquaintances," Hannibal answers eventually. "We didn't know each other as well as I had hope we might now."

Will snorts. "I don't think you'd find me interesting enough for that."

“I will,” Hannibal says quietly.

Hannibal takes his own turn in the bath, hissing as he too acclimates to the warmth and soaks a sore hand, and Will spends his time dressing in his now dry clothes and trying not to blatantly peek at Hannibal’s naked form. He’s very toned for a guy whose job involves sitting down all day, with a slight softening in the stomach and a liberal dusting of grey hair. If Will didn’t know he was a psychiatrist, he might be tempted to tap that.

Fortunately, Hannibal doesn’t notice. He apparently spends his bath time planning dinner, because after Will hides in the storage room to use the chamber pot, he emerges to find Hannibal full on cooking, combining stuff from the cooler with canned food.

“I thought you were a doctor,” Will says.

“A man can have hobbies,” Hannibal replies. “Can you lay out some plates?”

The meal tastes amazing, and Will can’t attribute it all to his starving stomach. He suspects even if he was fully fed, the meat alone would be worth stuffing his stomach with. He wipes at his mouth, trying to slow down. “That is a great hobby.”

Hannibal smiles. “I’m glad you approve.”

After dinner, Hannibal washes up while Will empties the tub. By then, he’s too busy yawning to really care that he and Hannibal are tumbling into the one bed together, because it’s big and he’s tired and it’s comforting to hear someone else breathing beside him and know that he is, in fact, alive, and not hallucinating still buried under snow and wreckage.

Plane wreckage.

All at once, Will is wide awake. “Hannibal?”

“Yes, Will?”

“Were we in a plane crash?”

“Hmm. Yes. Did you forget?”

“I . . . Maybe. What happened, how did we crash?”

Hannibal rolls over in the darkness. He must be looking at Will, perhaps gauging how much of a blow Will suffered to his head, but Will can’t tell in the darkness. He can only guess from the sound of Hannibal’s breathing and the warmth of his body inches from Will, like a predator curled up in the brush.

“An engine malfunction,” Hannibal says eventually. “The pilot lost control and we crashed.”

“Where are the others?”

“I searched. We were the only survivors.”

Will wets his lips. There's just something in how Hannibal said that. . . "And you're . . . happy?"

"Of course. I would not want to have survived alone. Would you?"

Will tries to imagine waking up along, stuck under a piece of wreckage, unable to move, unable to scream, unable to do anything but slowly freeze to death. He shivers and rolls over as well, curling closer to Hannibal's comforting and stabilizing warmth. If he closes his eyes, he can imagine that Hannibal is one of his dogs and this bed is his bed and this house is his little light in the darkness.

"I'm glad you survived too," Will whispers.

For a moment, he thinks Hannibal has fallen asleep and not heard. But then Hannibal moves again, the sheets scratching against the bed, and Hannibal says, "Good night, Will."

The next day is rather boring. A thick snowstorm descends, making even the idea of descent out of the question, so Will busies himself calculating their wood supply while Hannibal reorganizes the cabinets, apparently unhappy with how the canned tins were arranged. He also goes and grabs some more snow for his cooler, which holds some kind of meat. On the bright side, the meat tastes amazing, even though Will can't pronounce the dishes Hannibal produces.

They pass the day in companionable silence, and then they crawl into bed together and sleep by mutual agreement when the sun sets.

By day three, Will is quite bored, and almost toying with the idea of venturing outside. Hannibal puts a swift end to that with a stern glare, and to add insult to injury he then tasks Will with counting up their stock of tinned goods. Will knows Hannibal is more than well aware of their supply given how he reorganized it, but he still sits and counts anyways, if only to keep his mind busy.

Hannibal finally releases him when it's time for dinner, where he serves tongue, of all things. Will goggles at it, because there's an alpha instinct to provide, and then there's serving tongue.

"You just. Had tongue? With you?"

Hannibal slides the bowl in front of him. "Tongue is considered a delicacy in some parts of the world," he notes.

"Yeah. But. Where'd you get it?"

"A very chatty lamb," Hannibal jokes, settling into his seat.

Will stops with his spoon centimeters from his mouth, because now of all times, his empathy decides to put things together. Like the fact that the cooler had a clearly scraped away

“evidence” sticker. Like the fact that Hannibal was rubbing constantly at his hand, claiming it was sore. Like the fact that Hannibal clearly finds it amusing to make dark jokes, puzzles with innuendos, just to see who dares to crack it open.

Like the fact that one of the Ripper’s most famous killers was a man whose tongue was ripped out and placed as a bookmark in a Bible.

“Is the tongue not to your liking?” Hannibal asks courteously.

Will puts the spoon down, slowly, and looks at Hannibal again. He’s avoided doing so, partly out of habit to not challenging an alpha by looking them full in the face and partly because Hannibal is actually quite handsome, but now he opens his eyes and looks, and Will sees what a fool he’s been.

“You caused the plane crash,” Will whispers.

Hannibal tilts his head. “Now why would I do that?” he asks calmly, neither his voice or scent changing.

Getting the next words out takes more effort than pushing the plane wreckage off of his chest. But Will does it anyway, because all things must be uncovered eventually. “Because you’re the Chesapeake Ripper.”

That smile returns to Hannibal’s face, deep and dark and full of secrets. Beforehand, Will had thought it was because Hannibal was interested in him. Now, Will sees that Hannibal is interested in him because of his abilities, and not for the pure aesthetic admiration of Will’s body and his mind to keep Hannibal company in the snow.

“My clever Will,” Hannibal says. “So. You saw.”

Will stomach roils like an angry sea. Bile rises up his throat, but when he opens his mouth to gag nothing comes out; his stomach refuses to reject the only nourishment he has gotten in days. He coughs instead, chokes on his own spit, and flinches when Hannibal reaches out to him in concern.

“Don’t touch me! You fed me – oh my god, you fed me your kills,” Will realizes. “That’s why you went back to the crash. To find . . . meat.”

“We needed sustenance,” Hannibal says calmly. “And you enjoyed it, Will. Don’t forget that.”

The bile surges forward again. This time when Will coughs, he can taste the elaborate spices from yesterday’s meals, so beautifully combined even with the limited supplies. His stomach clamors for more even as he pushes the tongue away.

“I can’t believe you fed me human meat,” Will rasps.

Hannibal shrugs. “Should I have let the meat go to waste? The pigs are serving a better job now sustaining us than they did trying to imprison me.”

Will can see it so clearly now – Hannibal handcuffed between agents, biding his time, waiting and watching, Will called in to escort them and to evaluate their catch, and Hannibal striking the second everything was right, dislocating his thumb to get out of the cuffs and killing everyone in his path. He must have calculated their crash site, or been confident he could steer the plane – yet he didn't. Something happened, and instead they crashed with two survivors instead of one.

Will swallows. He's abruptly aware that he's spent the last three days in the company of a ruthless and skilled serial killer, that he's let this man cook for him and sleep beside him, that he's let him see Will naked and tend to his wounds.

All of it, a game, just like the Ripper likes to play.

"Are you going to kill me?" Will asks. If he were an omega, Hannibal could provoke him into heat and play with him that way, perhaps even force a bond and tie their loyalties together, but Will is a beta, and his reactions to alpha pheromones are limited to fight or flight.

Hannibal continues eating, like it's nothing. "What would be the fun in that? When the snow abates, you may leave. I won't stop you."

The worst part is that Will knows he's telling the truth.

He gets up and hides in the bed.

Hannibal doesn't follow.

The snowstorm stops in the middle of the night. Will awakens to find it a bright and clear day outside, and when he sticks his head out of the bedroom, he finds Hannibal asleep at the kitchen table. He looks impossibly soft like that, mouth open the tiniest bit, cheek creased from his shirt, legs splayed on the floor. But Will's eyes are opened now; he can see the apex alpha predator in the dozing lion, ready to spring forward at a moment's notice, and with his strength and speed, he could overpower a beta like Will easily.

So Will creeps to the door, easing it open and slipping on his boots and jacket as silently as he can before he flees into the snow.

He doesn't even think about it – just picks a direction and runs, shoes crunching the snow – but by luck or chance, he comes across the wreckage of the plane. It's quite impressive, with bodies here and there. He can also see that most of the crew were dead before the plane hit, as there's startlingly little blood, a testament to Hannibal's prowess. Will can even glimpse the fuselage he was trapped under before Hannibal saved him, for whatever reason.

The thought of Hannibal spurs him on, and he continues hurrying down the mountain.

By the time the sun has risen to the center of the sky, Will finally spots a town, small and homey but with cars and people, and he enters the first shop he reaches without pausing to even look at the shop's sign.

“Er, can I help you, good sir?” says an employee.

Will stomps his shoes, kicking off the snow, and then hurries to the counter. “Can I use a phone please? I need – I was stranded in the snow, lost my phone. I need to make a call.”

Two minutes later, and Will gets ahold of an old landline.

“Might get some static, but it should go through,” the employee informs him cheerfully, and then goes back to the counter.

Will dials Jack’s number on instinct, but with each ring his trepidation grows. After all, what can he possibly say? *Hi, Jack, I found the Chesapeake Ripper. How? Oh, I just stayed in a cabin with him for three days and ate the meat of his victims and slept in the same bed as him. And he saved my life. Usual occurrences in the life of Will Graham.*

Fortunately, before he can panic too much, the phone finally picks up.

“FBI Answering Service,” says a crisp voice.

Will blinks. “I’m uh. Looking for Jack Crawford?”

The voice pauses. “Sir?’

“Jack Crawford. Head of the BAU? Agent Crawford.”

“I’m . . . sorry to tell you, sir, that Agent Crawford resigned almost two years ago,” the voice says apologetically. “Should I pass you on to another agent?”

And Will isn’t stupid. He knows that someone like Jack would never retire. He would only leave if he died or got pushed out, and Will can guess which is more likely given the answers he’s getting. After all, Will had heard the warnings for Jack to stop focusing solely on the Ripper at the expense of others.

“Sir?”

Will looks to the ceiling. He was having a hard time imagining talking to Jack – he can’t imagine talking to anyone else. “No, I’m good, sorry, bye.”

Then he hangs up, and stares at the ceiling some more.

He is still staring when the employee comes back.

“You okay, sir? You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

“Of sorts,” Will mutters. “Thanks for the, uh, phone.”

“Sure. Although take care out there. Word is that the murder husbands got loose.”

Will blinks. He moves his eyes from the ceiling to the employee. “The who now?”

The employee brandishes a newspaper at him. It has a black-and-white photograph and a large title, but Will can't make it out because the man keeps moving it as he shakes it for emphasis. "The murder husbands!" the man repeats. "Hannibal the cannibal and his husband."

Will raises his eyebrow. He hadn't seen any distress in Hannibal, or any indication he was missing a partner. "That's . . . news."

To his shock, when the employee hands over the paper, he finds an old photo of Hannibal – which isn't surprising – and an old photo of himself, solemnly staring back. Hannibal has his playful dark little smile, but Will's photo has a straight line of frown, glasses on and hair cropped short, from his days in the academy. And right underneath that are mug photos, Hannibal still smiling in a straightjacket and mask, Will frowning with a straightjacket and mask as well.

A very familiar straightjacket.

Will thinks back to the coat he'd wearing backwards, and the strange straps he hadn't known what to do with. It hadn't been a coat at all, he realizes. It had been a straightjacket.

They had *both* been prisoners on the plane, Will in a straightjacket, Hannibal handcuffed. The agents had thought Will a greater threat because of his police background, and so Hannibal had got off lightly with handcuffs and ankle restraints and alpha suppressants. He'd built up a tolerance to the suppressants already, so they did nothing to dull his mind or slow his reflexes like intended, and the restraints he'd easily slipped when he saw an opportunity to kill the agents, quick as lightning before they could react. He'd even intended to free Will, but then he had to fight the pilot, and during the fight, they'd damaged the autopilot. Hannibal had gritted his teeth and cut open Will's straightjacket, but then the plane had plummeted, separating them as they fell from the sky.

Are you going to kill me? Will remembers asking on the plane, playful and teasing, only to see Hannibal grin, fierce and sharp like a shark.

A signal, to let Hannibal know it was time.

Will puts a finger on the photo. Hannibal is no less handsome in his younger photos, or concealed behind a mask. Plus it's not like Will can't say he doesn't understand the draw of darkness.

And just like that, the haze begins to lift, and Will remembers.

He throws the newspaper at the employee with a hasty thanks and dashes back up the mountain. With each stride, he remembers more and more – the police raid in the middle of the night, guns at their door and windows; the fight that ended when a police taser dropped Hannibal like a sack of potatoes; the loading into the plane. And even further back – stealing medicine like pickpockets, cramming their faces with canned food and dodgy fast food, healing oh so slowly from the dragon's fight. When at last he crests the hill and catches sight of the cabin, the last memory floats free, landing on the surface of Will's mind's eye like a leaf on the river: "I don't find you interesting" and "You will".

Will flings open the door. "Hannibal!"

It's empty. The fire is completely out, the bed is made, and the kitchen untouched. It's like no one was ever here.

"HANNIBAL!" Will yells.

A polite cough sounds behind him. Will turns, joy filling his breast, as Hannibal walks up, cool as ice.

"If you are attempting to persuade me to turn myself in, there are better ways," Hannibal says.

Will ignores him and runs forward, flinging his arms around his husband and squeezing him so tightly he can hear Hannibal's bones creak. Hannibal does nothing, of course – Will knows Hannibal would never hurt him, even if Wil forgot him – but he does briefly press his nose into Will's hair, scenting him cautiously.

Will hugs him even tighter. "I remember," he says against Hannibal's chest, inhaling the familiar scent of his mate. "I remember everything."

And, well, Hannibal wasn't the best uncaught serial killer for decades for no reason. He can read a body like no other, except perhaps like Will, and so he shudders and closes his arms around Will, relief echoing from every part of him.

"I had hoped," Hannibal says. "To lose you to death's embrace would be unthinkable – to lose you to Lethe's embrace would be even worse."

"I'm here," Will whispers. "I remember."

Then he kisses Hannibal, and when Hannibal kisses back it's like everything is right in the world again, all the puzzle pieces falling back into place, the sun and moon restored to orbit, round and round and round. Will is home again, with the one person he loves more than anything else, and who loves him back, as completely and monstrously as he knows how.

"Were you just going to . . . wait here until you were caught?" Will asks, when they separate. "If I returned with the police.

Hannibal kisses his forehead. "I told you once I wanted you to know exactly where I was. Where you could always find me. I saw no reason to deviate from that."

"You're such a sap," Will says fondly. "Come on, let's get out of here before Jack sends more guys after us."

"We shall face them together, as we always do. Although perhaps in a place warmer than this."

Will takes Hannibal's hand. He feels strong again, stronger than he's felt since he woke with wreckage pinning him down, and he knows all is right with the world again. He can face anything, defeat anyone, overcome any obstacle, if he has Hannibal by his side.

“Well, then,” Will says, “let’s make good on our escape. It would be a shame to waste your efforts.”

FINIS

Chapter End Notes

A/N: And then Hannibal and Will yet again fake their deaths and escape the FBI and go find a nice warm place to relax.

FYI for anyone who's confused: Lethe is the river of forgetfulness and oblivion in Greek mythology. If you drank from its waters, you would forget everything.

Hint for Day 11: It involves animal transformations. Stay tuned for the reveal in two days!

Creature Fic - Beta!Will & Beta!Hannibal

Chapter Summary

When does Will know that letting Jack do the wedding toast was a mistake? When Jack starts the speech with: “The first time our Will Graham met the good Dr. Hannibal Lecter, Hannibal turned in a ravenstag.”

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Hannibal's a bit of a stalker, as usual

Inspired by: I was chatting with some friends and suddenly I was like "y'all would it not be hilarious if people turned into animals when they fell in love, so in Jack's office, Hannibal just bursts into a giant ravenstag" and they countered "wouldn't it be funnier if it happened after Tobias's death" and I was like "ONE HUNDRED PERCENT" and now here we are.

Dynamics: Beta!Will & Beta!Hannibal

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When they get married, Jack delivers the speech, because Will absolutely refuses and Hannibal has too many things to say. At first, Will thinks this is a good thing, because Jack is loud so everyone can hear him, imposing so everyone will listen, and blunt enough to keep it as short as Will wants.

Jack gets the microphone and starts off relatively well. He thanks everyone for coming, wrangles a round of applause, and puts up with Hannibal kissing Will again like the show-off he is.

Then he says, “The first time our Will Graham met the good Dr. Hannibal Lecter, Hannibal turned in a ravenstag.”

And that is when Will knows letting Jack do the speech was a mistake.

Will at first thinks very little of the man wearing a suit in Jack’s office when he sits down for an update on the missing girls case. He thinks the man is another agent, or perhaps a reporter, or another teacher. He does not expect a psychiatrist, of all people, and definitely not one that Jack actually expects him to speak to.

Therefore, Will is angry, unsettled, and unnerved as he grabs his coat and goes to leave, and he has to breathe deeply and clench his hand tightly to prevent himself from reacting.

Dr. Lecter, apparently, doesn't get off so luckily.

Just as Will is reaching out to grab the door and run away and bury himself in class, he hears the telltale combination of grunting and ripping that signals a shift. He whips around, slapping his own bookbag against his legs, just in time to see Jack back all the way into the wall, trying to escape the gradual slide of his desk as it is pushed away.

No longer is there a mild-mannered, suit-wearing, annoying observant doctor sitting in between Jack's desk and the door.

Instead, there is a massive creature, black as night, slowly shaking itself to escape the fibers of torn clothing. The creature's shoulders alone come to Will's head, but it has an impressive rack of antlers that just about scrape the ceiling as the creature tilts its head and snorts. It scrapes a hoof against the ground, grinding the remnants of what was surely a thousand dollar suit into the carpet, and then it pushes past the overturned chair to stand in front of Will, huffing and puffing from the exertion of a shift.

And, well, Will had guessed that Dr. Lecter had blue blood in him, but here is the proof, for the mutation for emotional creature shifting is incredibly rare and was guarded jealously by monarchies and nobility. It's pretty much died out in everyone else.

The creature snorts and lowers its head towards Will, and Will holds very, very still. People with ECS only are triggered by extreme emotion, such as intense grief, overwhelming rage, or overpowering love, and Will can think of only one reason that Dr. Lecter might shift due to Will insulting him, and it isn't a pretty reason. Kings with ECS used to transform to kill people they didn't like, after all.

Its snout bumps into Will's forehead, and it rubs once, twice, like a cat seeking a pet, but it takes another step forward and begins to snuffle through Will's hair.

Instinct drives Will to lift his hand, tentatively reaching towards the fur and feathers in front of his face, and the creature utters a quiet noise, like a purr but infinitely deeper, before stepping forward again so that Will's hand makes contact. Its fur is unbelievably soft and warm, like the thickest and shaggiest of Will's pack, and run through with sleek feathers that gleam under the lights.

"So," Will says, "you're got some explaining to do, Dr. Lecter."

Dr. Lecter snorts again, ruffling Will's hair, and pointedly does not transform back.

Dr. Lecter follows Will all the way home, because he thinks he's cute. Will doesn't even realize it until he opens his door and his pack comes pouring out to greet him, and half of them rub against his legs for pets and the other half start barking at the intruder down the road. Will looks up and sees the ravenstag, silent and solemn and standing in the distance like a goddamn omen of death.

Will cups his hands around his mouth. “Oi! I thought I’d said to go away!”

The ravenstag folds its legs and sits.

“You are unbelievable,” Will mutters.

He tends to his dogs, hoping against hope that Dr. Lecter will get bored and go away, but instead when he comes back out ready for a long walk, Dr. Lecter gets up and appears every bit ready to follow Will around like a shadow. Will sighs and beckons him closer, leading to a rather startling moment when five hundred pound stag gallops towards him and his dogs scatter with a riot of alarmed barking.

Will pats Dr. Lecter on the shoulder, and he receives a friendly whuff in return.

“I’m a beta, you know,” Will tells him. “I have entirely the wrong organs to pass on the ECS gene. You are barking up the wrong tree.”

Dr. Lecter stomps one of his legs down, startling off one of Will’s more curious dogs, but he seems calm and does not stop keeping pace with Will as they walk. He’s heard that people with ECS generally retain their mind, but only in the most abstract sense – they’d be able to control themselves and not bolt like an animal if a siren went off, but they regard people and situations more like friend or foe, with more nuanced thinking blurred into more animal considerations. Human language is often beyond them, but they don’t exactly get on well with animals either.

“I wonder what blue blood bred your mutation,” Will continues, smoothing a hand through feathers and fur. “I thought people with ECS only turned into animals. Real animals.”

Dr. Lecter’s head turns and regards him through one bright eye. He doesn’t seem to care that Will is petting him like a common dog, but maybe he will when he returns to human form. After all, Will still has no idea why he of all people triggered Dr. Lecter.

“Let’s go home, okay?” Will says. “That means you gallop off back to your fancy house.”

Dr. Lecter follows him home. Again.

Will lets the ravenstag into his house, mostly because the second time he looks over to his window and sees the giant rack of antlers outside he has a heart attack, so he relents and opens the door. The ravenstag has to bow his great head to fit in the doorway, and he’s hilariously out of place in Will’s mismatched home, but once he deigns to fold his long legs down, it’s not so bad. He’s kind of like a big dog, given how his eyes track the movement of Will’s plate and how he gently lays his head in Will’s lap.

“You are so weird,” Will mutters, scratching at the side of the ravenstag’s neck.

The ravenstag snorts and goes still.

Will balances one hand on the ravenstag’s neck, still scratching gently at the feathers, and uses his other hand to fish out his phone. Mindful of the sharp antlers, he Googles ECS,

because Dr. Lecter is clearly in no place to tell him any information.

Google isn't all that helpful, though. Will learns that the first sightings of ECS were mistaken for demonic possession, and that it swung wildly from *must-burn-at-stake* to *chosen-vessels-of-angels*. Once it did swing, though, it became very desired; people were known to form alliances on the basis of having a child with ECS, to showcase their divine right to be king. However, just like inbreeding lead to clouded minds and rampant hemophilia, so too did ECS start to devolve into strange creature forms and people who would turn . . . and never turn back.

Will stills and looks down at the dozing ravenstag occupying his lap. "You better turn back," he says flatly. "I do not have enough space for an entire ravenstag all year round. For one thing, you don't even fit in my car."

Dr. Lecter ignores him. Will's sort of getting used to that.

After a few more Google searches lead nowhere, Will pushes the ravenstag off of his lap – it takes both hands and a judicious amount of force before the ravenstag even seems to notice that Will was pushing – and heads to bed. He follows Will to the doorway and folds himself down, but sensibly not too close, so Will won't impale himself if he gets up in the middle of the night. There he lays his head on the floor and just . . . watches.

Will levels a finger at him. "That's creepy, at least pretend to sleep."

The ravenstag does not.

Will pulls his blankets over his head and pretends he's alone. It takes a long time for him to fall asleep.

The next morning, Dr. Lecter is thankfully human-shaped again. Unfortunately, Will discovers this when he walks into the guy in the bathroom.

Literally.

"My apologies," Dr. Lecter says, as Will slaps a hand over his face and marches out of the bathroom, skin still smarting from where he'd collided with Dr. Lecter's back. "You seemed sound asleep."

"Do you usually piss with the door open?!"

"We both live alone."

Will throws a bathrobe at him and then takes a nice cold shower, and by the time he's done, Dr. Lecter has raided Will's fridge and produced a nice spread of eggs, toast, and sausages. Will's not really sure where he got half of the supplies, since he was sure all he had was eggs and maybe a pot of jam, but he's too hungry to question it.

Midway through breakfast, Dr. Lecter clears his throat. "I must offer my thanks."

“Uh . . . you cooked breakfast.”

He smiles. “Most people would not welcome an animal, even a human in an animal’s skin, into their home.”

“I figured I triggered you, so it was kind of my fault.” Will stuffs the last bit of toast into his mouth and chews. “Uh. I did trigger you, right?”

“You did.”

Will inhales, testing the scents in his mouth. He’d scented Dr. Lecter in Jack’s office, of course, it’s instinct for everyone when they hit puberty, but he’d gotten nothing then but the standard stale smell of suppressants. Now, though, he can smell the muted tang of citrus and smoky burn of ash.

“You’re a beta.”

Dr. Lecter tilts his head. “But of course. Everyone with ECS does.”

“Uh . . .”

“You might assume that only alphas did, or omegas. The story is allowed to flourish, and of course no one quite remembers the truth anymore, but without question every person with a confirmed case of ECS is a beta.”

Will blinks. “But I googled and – ”

“Found many ardent tales of strong, powerful alphas who turned into bears or lions, I’m aware. It is advantageous, is it not, to be thought of as an alpha?” When Will nods, Dr. Lecter continues, “It is said that a beta once lost the one he loved to an alpha, for although he had the fortune, the alpha had the blood and the title, and he knew he could not win the love of his life by combat, for any alpha can easily defeat a beta. So he went to the god of the seas, and he prayed, and he offered all that he was in return for a boon. And the god of the seas said no. So he went to the god of the mountains, and he prayed, and he offered all that he was in return for a boon. And the god of the mountains said no. So he went to the god of the forests, and he prayed, and he offered all that he was in return for a boon. And the god of the forests said – ”

“Let me guess,” Will says, crossing his arms. “They said no. Can we get to the point?”

Dr. Lecter raises an eyebrow. “Actually, the god of the forests said yes. He would give to this man a form of immense strength, so that he might defeat his rival, and in return, he must agree to feed the blood of his defeated rival to the forest. He did so. And he became the first person with ECS, for at the sight of his alpha rival he felt immense rage and transformed into a mighty stag, and he passed it down amongst his children.”

It’s an interesting story. It’s a very interesting story. But Will is aware that not all interesting stories are true.

“And why does no one know this story?”

“Do you know any alpha who would admit that they could be unseated by a beta?”

“Yeah, you have a point,” Will concedes. He idly stabs another sausage, tucking it into his mouth to avoid the begging eyes of his dogs. Dr. Lecter seems to have no such compunction; he cuts his into neat little squares and brings them delicately to his mouth.

When the meal is done, Will finally asks the last question on his mind.

“I notice you didn’t deny that people with ECS transform when they feel intense emotion.”

Dr. Lecter nods. “That has remained true.”

“So . . . why me?”

“Because you are my mate.”

Will chokes on his water and drops his cup on the ground. It doesn’t break, although he does get several new snuffling noses near his legs as his dogs investigate. Dr. Lecter seems unfazed, although he at least puts down his silverware as he continues staring at Will much the same way the ravenstag did.

Will wheezes and wipes at his streaming eyes. After a few more breaths, he feels human again, or at least human enough to choke out, “Excuse me?”

“We transform when we feel intense emotion,” Dr. Lecter notes. “That includes finding our mate.”

“I’m a beta!”

“Ah, didn’t I mention? The very first person with ECS, the one he loved? She was a beta too.”

“So, what? Alphas and omegas gets ruts and heats, and we get to turn into animals?”

“An apt comparison. Although you will not transform unless you also carry the gene. Have you ever turned into an animal?”

“Uh, no. I’d remember that.”

“Pity. I think you would be glorious.”

Will rolls his eyes. “And what kind of animal do you think I’d be?”

“A mongoose,” Dr. Lecter says, smiling. “Fierce and strong and confident enough to take on the snakes of the world without fear. Jack told me what you do. What you can do. You track down the killers of this world so they can receive justice, all whilst avoiding the whispering of the serpent in your mind.”

Will lifts his chin. It wouldn’t be the first time he’s been criticized over his work, but Will won’t let it slide either. “Are you frightened of the serpents of the world, Dr. Lecter?”

“I would trample them beneath my hooves, just as the first of us once did. And please, call me Hannibal. I would like to get to know you.”

“And if I don’t think you’re interesting enough to get to know?’

“You will.”

Hannibal does them both a favor and remains in human form the next time they meet, and the time after that. He even keeps his cool when they stumble across murderers and crime scenes and grisly corpses, which Will is grateful for. He’s still iffy on the whole “we are mates” thing, but he appreciates a voice of reason that isn’t Jack and is agreeable to serving as his paddle.

He doesn’t quite realize just how much he appreciates Hannibal until Tobias Budge, when Will – through ringing ears and an aching head – hears that there are two bodies at the crime scene in Hannibal’s office over the radio and floors the gas pedal all the way, heart pounding and mind racing.

Will bolts up the stairs, shouldering cops and medics out of the way, and he has exactly two seconds to breathe a sigh of relief when he sees that one body is Tobias and the other is far too large and badly dressed to be Hannibal. When he sees Hannibal, though, that sigh turns into a shudder, as if his entire body is releasing the pent up fear that’s built up in his muscles like lactic acid. Hannibal seems equally affected; he pushes away the medics and the cops, staring at Will like the very sight of him is all the sustenance he needs.

A second later, and Hannibal is groaning as his bones crack and his clothes tear, and Will realizes he is about to transform. It’s so distracting, to see the beautifully painful process of transformation, and Will is so mesmerized that he doesn’t even realize that Hannibal is growing larger not just because his ravenstag form is massive, but because Will himself is growing smaller.

Indeed, it is not until Will’s vision is swallowed up by darkness that Will realizes that he is actually still shuddering, and the quick breathes emerging from his mouth have turned into tiny high pitched chitters.

He pushes through, struggling against the cloth containing him, wondering why a medic through it necessary or proper to throw a shock blanket over his head, until he finds the light.

He also finds a group of very shocked and very tall humans, all staring, and Will swings his head about a few times before it dawns upon him that he is so close the ground he can almost taste it. Will looks down and yips in shock, because his fingers are now bare and furry, and he can pick up the scent of harsh rug cleaner and salty blood.

Someone stomps on the ground, hard and loud, and a snort echoes through the room. Will looks up, and everything vanishes from his mind – not the humans staring at him, not the scent of death, not the flashes and clicks of cameras. All that matters is his mate, strong and powerful and smelling like adrenaline and victory, and so Will darts forward, dodging the hands that seek to grab him, until he’s in front of his mate. His mate is enormous, far bigger

than he, but Will feels no fear, and his mate lowers his mighty head until he can nuzzle at Will, so tender and gentle for one carrying wicked weapons atop his head.

Will chitters at him, and the ravenstag rumbles back.

Distantly, as if from down a long hallway, Will hears the echoes of an enraged Jack. “THIS ISN’T FUNNY, YOU TWO!” Jack bellows. “I CAN’T TAKE A STATEMENT FROM A STAG AND A – A WEASEL!”

Hannibal snorts again, seeming entirely unperturbed, and when he nudges at Will again, Will takes the clear invitation and fixes his teeth onto Hannibal’s antlers. Hannibal gently lifts him up and lets him slide down his neck and curl up in a neat little ball on his shoulders, and the scent of his mate and the softness of his fur makes Will want to roll around in it forever.

Jack says more things, loudly and quite unhappily, but eventually Hannibal just starts walking, and Jack is forced to pass, because Hannibal is a five hundred pound ravenstag and Jack is just one human. Will hangs on as Hannibal clatters down the footsteps, shoves the door open, and then begins to walk faster and faster, until he’s galloping. It should unnerve him, perhaps, but all Will thinks about is how he’s with his mate, and that fact is all that matters.

When Hannibal finally slows, several minutes or hours later, Will looks up from rolling around and realizes that they are in Hannibal’s neighborhood. Hannibal clears the fence around his house in one powerful jump, and then he trots up to the back porch as confidently as he’d trotted up to Will’s. He shakes himself, just once, and Will takes the hint and jumps down.

He watches again, mesmerized anew, as Hannibal shudders and groans through the transformation back, until he’s a human again, with dirt upon his feet and blood on his hands, naked as a newborn babe and seemingly not the least bothered. Yet Will still knows him, just as he knows that the earth is beneath him and the sky above, for even when Hannibal reaches down to scoop him up, he knows the scent of his true mate.

As Hannibal slowly walks into his house, he speaks. “As always, you astonish me,” Hannibal says. “What a beautiful creature you are.”

Will chitters at him. The words mean more, now, coming from his mate instead of a random human like Jack, but Will still has little desires beyond staying with Hannibal. He feels no urge to speak, so long as Hannibal continues to carry him close.

“A golden mongoose,” Hannibal muses, running a finger down his spine and teasing his tail. “Simply beautiful, my love.”

He does attempt to put Will down when he reaches his bathroom upstairs; Will rectifies that mistake by sinking his teeth into Hannibal’s fingers. Hannibal merely laughs, though, and transfers Will to his shoulder like a living scarf, which Will allows as an acceptable compromise.

After Hannibal washes his hands and scrubs down his legs, he pats at Will again. “Change back whenever you like, my dear. It may be slightly discomforting for you, but we all are able to, in the end. Simple focus on human things. But when you’re ready; your form is far easier to accommodate than mine, after all.”

Will chitters at him again and closes his eyes. He sees no reason to part from his mate, and it is soothing, to press his cheek against Hannibal’s neck and scent the citrus of his sweat, to sense the heat of his skin, to hear the thunder of his heartbeat. No reason at all.

“ – And then the second Will transformed back, I have it on good authority that Hannibal dropped to one knee and proposed right then and there,” Jack concluded, to uproarious laughter amongst the audience. “Naked as the day he was born, and Will *accepted*. I definitely thought he’d lost his mind. But hey, here we are, and I couldn’t be happier to see these two united today. A toast – to the happy couple, Hannibal and Will!”

Hannibal, of course, raises a glass, smiling genially at everyone’s echoed compliments. Will buries his face in Hannibal’s shoulders and moans.

“Only a little longer, my darling,” Hannibal says.

“Why did you decide to make this ceremony so looooooong.”

Hannibal kisses his head again. “What’s wrong with telling the world how lucky of a man I am, to have found my perfect mate and have him agree to marry someone like me?”

Will has to smile at that. He nuzzles into Hannibal’s neck, just to feel the way Hannibal shudders at the sensation of Will’s breath against his skin. “We both know that it’s because someone like you was perfect for someone like me,” he whispers. “Don’t we?”

After all, there’s a part of the story that Jack doesn’t know – that no one knows – about the minutes after Will transformed back but before Hannibal proposed, about the exact spot of their proposal, about the contents of the first meal they’d eaten together as an engaged couple. And Jack would never ask, as he’d knocked on their door the next morning demanding assistance with a brand new and very savage Ripper murder and then fled when Will opened the door butt naked.

Hannibal swallows, and Will pats him on the thigh before Hannibal transforms and carries him off then and there.

“Calm down, husband-mine. You did design a ceremony that still has two hours left. And it would be rude to abandon our guests.”

Hannibal lets out a very long breath. Slowly, bit by bit, he unclenches his hand, yet when he kisses Will again he seems completely in control of himself again, not a hint of the rippling transformation that almost turned skin and hair into fur and feathers. “But of course, my darling. It would indeed be very rude.”

“Eat before the food gets cold, lovebirds,” Jack interrupts, elbowing Hannibal. “Afterwards everyone will mob you for photos or a dance or congratulations, so you won’t get another chance to eat until you’re on the plane to your honeymoon. Trust me.”

Bella smiles fondly from where she’s sitting next to Jack. “Jack’s right,” she says, sounding wistful. “And this does taste divine, Hannibal. I can’t believe you took the time to cater your own wedding.”

“I only wanted the very best for my husband,” Hannibal says, beaming. “I’m glad you enjoy it.”

“What kind of meat is this again?” Jack asks, loading up his fork. “I’ve never eaten anything so good in my life.”

Hannibal smiles and laces his fingers with Will’s. “Why,” he answers, “pork, of course.”

FINIS

Chapter End Notes

A/N: And then Hannibal and Will live together as a happily married couple, hunting as humans or in their animal forms. Jack never catches on, but he contributes to the growing FBI album of "random times Hannibal and/or Will made eye contact and subsequently destroyed their clothing".

Hint for Day 12: It involves kisses, kisses, and more kisses. Stay tuned for the reveal in a few days!

New Year - Omega!Will & Alpha Hannibal

Chapter Summary

Hannibal's New Year resolution is to marry Will. Will's New Year resolution is to christen every single surface in their house. They both have a really great New Year.

Chapter Notes

Warnings: If knotting ain't your cup of tea, apologies in advance

Inspired by: I was thinking about New Year's resolutions and I was like "ya know I bet one of Hannibal's resolutions is to marry Will" and then I was like "wouldn't it be hilarious if they were so overcome at the sight of the rings on each other that they banged on every single surface of their home" aaaaaaaaand here we are.

Dynamics: Omega!Will & Alpha!Hannibal

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They watch the fireworks show from the balcony. Hannibal usually has no interest in boisterous and ostentatious displays, especially when it's accompanied by loud booming explosions, eye-searing bright lights, and drunken raucous crowds, but their high rise apartment comes with a balcony, high enough that the noise from the crowd is lessened and large enough to accommodate proper supplies to witness the fireworks show.

Or, at least, that is what Will argues as he drags a daybed out, arranges blankets, and fluffs up some pillows. Hannibal just agrees because Will is going to be there, and he is loath to leave him outside, alone and in the cold.

It won't be cold, of course. Will has taken what seems like all of the blankets in their apartment, minus the linen sheets. And he won't be alone; Will's dog, a stray plucked from the docks where they landed after months at sea, is his faithful shadow and his wariness of strangers means he's the perfect guard for Will. But logic is only so strong against the power of alpha instinct, and Hannibal's alpha instincts clamor at him not to let his omega out of his sight, not when he can smell and hear and see so many gathered in celebration of the new year.

So when Will curls up in his nest of blankets, his dog panting on the floor and a tray of biscuits and cheese plucked from the fridge, Hannibal sighs and follows along.

“What happened to fireworks being gauche and dull?” Will says, beaming as Hannibal pushes and wriggles and pulls until they are both ensconced in blankets. “I thought someone said they were most definitely getting a good night’s sleep in the comfort of their own bed.”

“This is my own bed,” Hannibal says dryly. “I bought it. And as far as I recall, you did not wish me to.”

Will waves an airy hand. “Eh, I came around eventually, since you won’t let Heidi on the bed.”

“Dogs do not belong on beds, Will.”

“All she would do is cuddle with me. And shed. And maybe drool. It’s not like you don’t do those things.”

“I do not shed.”

Will grins, teeth flashing in the dull light of their apartment. “We can’t all age gracefully in every matter, Hannibal. It’s okay,” he adds, patting Hannibal on the chest. “I won’t think you’re a lesser alpha because you need a lot more product in your hair now.”

“I put plenty of product in my hair back when we first met.”

“Uh huh.”

Hannibal gives it up. It’s a long running argument, ever since Hannibal stealthily replaced all of their shampoo and conditioner and lotion with brands that weren’t the first things Will had seen and thrown into his basket at the dollar store. Will uses them without complaint – with omegas, the softer and higher quality the brand, usually the better – but he still ribs Hannibal about it, because usually omegas are the ones worrying about the perfect combination of cleanser and moisturizer.

The attentive care has served Will well, though. His hair and skin glow, and Hannibal has fed his omega the best of the best, until they both regained the muscle and fat lost to months of recovery with limited options in a tiny boat pantry. Even without makeup and disguises, he looks far different from the hunched, withdrawn, sweaty man who’d gotten offended at Hannibal’s very existence.

Well. He still doesn’t appreciate too much of Hannibal’s psychoanalyzing.

But he does like to be close to Hannibal, to curl up beside him or run down prey with him or bury his teeth in Hannibal’s neck and take his pleasure from Hannibal with the same ruthless strength that took down the Dragon. Those moments are the best, and all the better now that Will doesn’t smell of cheap cologne.

Will checks the time on his phone, stuffing yet another biscuit into his mouth. “We’ve got time to kill,” he notes. “You gonna make an elaborate new year’s meal?”

Hannibal has held a dinner party or two, mostly to cement their reputation in town as a friendly if somewhat aloof couple. Most people are content to eye them with envy, curious

and covetous of their fine clothes and fine apartment, but Will is accepting of the spotlight, because he and Hannibal know too well that if people are busy eyeing their clothing, they aren't spending nearly as much time thinking about where they came from, or who they might resemble.

But not tonight of all nights. The meat is fresh, very fresh, and good quality, and Hannibal wants to present it to Will and bask in his presence tonight. A night with Will is far better than a year with vapid, blabbering fools.

"For you, my love," Hannibal replies. "But no one else."

Will cocks an eyebrow. "A private feast? You honor me."

The words are flavored with sarcasm, the barest sting of playful provocation, but Hannibal lets it slide. Will has never been a traditional omega, not in all the time Hannibal has known him, and Hannibal likes him that way. Some alphas might be satisfied with omegas that sink to the knees and flutter their eyelashes at the merest hint of an alpha; Hannibal, on the contrary, never feels more alive than Will bares his teeth and refuses to yield. After all, what satisfaction is there in fighting sheep?

"I would do no less to honor your efforts," is all Hannibal says.

Will snorts at that, because he usually has little patience for the careful harvesting of meat and more than once has wreaked a pig too much for Hannibal to gain any useful sustenance, but he does not protest. Hannibal cooked him an elaborate meal after their very first hunt, and he is careful to never take his beloved's eagerness and ferocity for granted.

Yet he also adores when Will goes soft and quiet, like he is now, curled against Hannibal's chest, a gentle purr thrumming through his chest, every inch the contented omega.

Hannibal responds with his own purr, rougher and deeper, alpha reassurance to omega happiness, and thus he almost misses Will's next words.

"It's the new year," Will murmurs. "What is your resolution?"

And maybe it's scent of Will, pleased and sated, or maybe it's the faint aches of advancing age, or maybe it's just the moment itself, still and quiet in the dark, but Hannibal finds himself speaking without conscious effort, words spilling from his mouth as easily as wine from a bottle. "To get married."

Will lifts his head from Hannibal's chest. "Really?"

Hannibal shuts his mouth with a click. Alphas and omegas don't need to get married, after all; an alpha-omega bond is recognized across the world and bestows many of the same rights as marriage. Unfair, perhaps, to other couples, but it is the standard regardless. Yet Hannibal still has memories of his parents – bound by rings and by blood – and he feels the desire to tie Will to him in every way possible, to know that Will has chosen not only to carry Hannibal's bite on his neck but Hannibal's ring on his finger. It is illogical and nonsensical, but it burns inside of Hannibal anyways.

“Huh,” Will says after a moment, eyes focused on whatever he can see within Hannibal, his remarkable talents still as powerful as they were before they met. “Sure, let’s do it.”

“ . . . What?”

Will pushes himself to sit back on his haunches, a faint smile on his face. “Let’s get married,” he repeats.

And, well. Never let it be said that Hannibal does not seize opportunity when it comes knocking.

Later, Hannibal will not remember who started it: whether it was Will, nuzzling at his neck sweetly in the car, or whether it was him, kissing Will senseless in the elevator. Either way, it matters not – after the fireworks everyone retreats to get drunk or party or do whatever it is they do, but it means that Hannibal is free to carry Will off the elevator and into their apartment without once pausing to take his lips off his omega, his mate, his *husband*.

“I thought – we’d cured you – of wearing – so many – damn – layers!” Will complains in between kisses, fingers scrabbling at the buttons of Hannibal’s shirt. “Come on, off, off, get it off!”

Hannibal would normally assist – he never denies Will anything – but currently his hands are occupied in Will’s pants and his mouth is busy on Will’s neck, so he just grunts and lets Will continue to destroy a shirt that is enough to buy a car. He can always buy more.

Fortunately or unfortunately, Will gives up on the shirt and goes to work on Hannibal’s pants instead, making Hannibal nearly drop his husband when Will gets his hands around him.

“Will – Will perhaps – the bed –”

“I want you and I want you now,” Will snarls, and he effectively cuts off any more protest by bearing down until Hannibal has no choice but to brace them against the door or risk dropping Will on the floor rather ungracefully. It is by no means elegant, but then again, the first they had mated had been on the floor of a boat, when Will had shoved Hannibal off the bed in a fit of anger and sat on him and affixed his teeth to Hannibal’s neck.

Hannibal doesn’t bite Will’s neck now, mostly because if he did the rush of endorphins would make it impossible to stop biting more and more and more, so instead he sinks his teeth into the collar of Will’s shirt, groaning through the white-hot agony of release as his knot expands.

Will just sighs and thumps his head against the wall, oozing the kind of burnt sugar contentment that only comes with a knot.

“See,” he says dazedly. “I knew you could do it.”

Hannibal has to work his jaw several moments before he can muster enough control to let go and speak like a human instead of snarling. “Your faith in me is astounding.”

Will smirks. “You’ve carried heavier weights than me, husband-mine.”

And that . . . that does not help matters. Hannibal can feel the instincts gnawing at the edge of his mind – the drive to sink his teeth so deep into Will’s neck that he drinks a river of blood, the drive to knot Will and keep knotting him for days on end, the drive to barricade them in a room under a nest of blankets and not emerge under their children are born. But he is more than instinct, and so he just nips gently at Will’s neck.

“Yes, I have,” Hannibal says. “But perhaps we should – we should relocate. To the bed.”

“Are you afraid?”

Hannibal swallows, because he can hear the challenge in Will’s words, and he knows what possibility Will is considering. After all, Will has an implant, protecting him from accidental pregnancy but also surprise heats. Hannibal, however, does not. With the two of them bonded and now with Hannibal flush with the adrenaline high of putting a ring on Will’s finger, it would be so easy for Will to tip Hannibal straight into a full blown rut, where he would lose all of his senses and be helpless to anything Will might ask or demand of him.

“Yes,” Hannibal says hoarsely.

Will wraps his arms around Hannibal’s neck, fingers caressing the side of his neck and his hair. He leans close. “Good,” Will says. “You should be. Because I think my new year’s resolution is going to be a christening of our new home.”

Hannibal can’t help the shudder that escapes him at that. He is old enough now that a prolonged knotting is more torturous than it is rapturous, especially without the boost of rut to cloud his mind and dull his senses. But Will – having spent so long suppressing his heats and enjoying the company of mostly beta women – enjoys the rush that comes with accepting a knot, with giving in to the omega instincts that clamor so fiercely inside of him, with having the fierce joy of seeing how each breath he takes makes Hannibal whimper. Will won’t let him off so easily, not when he has that glint in his eye.

Of course, Will also is well aware of this. “Do you want me to push you into rut?” he asks.

Hannibal weighs his options. One on hand, he can give into rut, give in and come back to himself a week later with his muscles sore, his jaw aching, his mind blurred. On the other hand, he can refuse, he can have clear memory of his Will taking pleasure as he likes, he can ride the edge of pain until the pain and pleasure of knotting coalesces into one.

“No,” Hannibal says, before he can stop himself, as Will wriggles and stretches his feet to the floor. “No, I would remember my first night with my husband.”

Will laughs. He brushes a kiss to Hannibal’s cheek before he separates them, leaving Hannibal to slump against the door in the most undignified position, knot still shrinking and clothes in disarray. Will stretches, not the least bothered, and then begins to kick away his pants and tug off his shirt.

“Well, get undressed,” Will chides. “We’ve got so many more surfaces to christen.”

And Hannibal. Well. Hannibal can't do anything but obey.

Somehow, Hannibal survives the night.

He wakes up the next morning with Will tucked against him, snoring faintly, and when he strokes down his husband's back, the sun glints off the ring nestled on his finger, and he is struck anew by wonder. Will *agreed* to marry him – purchased a ring, got it engraved, slid it on his finger and said his vows and kissed him. He had thought it would take many years of careful coaxing, and yet here he is, not even a year after Will chose him for good and now they are bound for the rest of their days.

The engraving of his ring definitely took a lot longer than when he engraved Will's, though, and Will had refused to let him help or look. Curious, he slips the ring off and peers inside.

In tiny flowing font, it says: *This is Hannibal. He's an a—hole. If found, return to Will*.

Hannibal sighs and puts it back on his finger.

"I suppose I deserve that," Hannibal muses, when he catches the way Will is looking at him from sleepy half-open eyes.

"Yeah, you do," Will yawns. "Don't think I didn't notice that you filled my ring with ten thousand different words for beloved, like the weirdo you are."

"How else might I say that I love you?"

"With food. I'm starving."

"You did put us through a rigorous regime of exercise yesterday."

"You're the health nut who keeps harping on and on about how we need to exercise," Will points out. "So you gonna cook for me or not?"

"How about a little protein scramble to start the day? We even have fresh pork."

Will grins and kisses him. "That sounds perfect, husband-mine."

FINIS

Chapter End Notes

A/N: And then Hannibal and Will live happily ever after as a married couple. Hannibal even discretely greases some palms so that he gets a real marriage cert with their real names on it filed and everything. Jack goes from "WE HAVE EVIDENCE WE CAN

USE TO TRACK THEM HELL YEAH" to "ARE YOU KIDDING ME HE CAME OUT OF HIDING FOR THIS".

And thus ends my 12 Days of Murdermas! Thank you so much for all of your support, kudos, and comments ❤️❤️❤️ I will post one final chapter, which is just going to be the index of all the summaries and tags and whatnot, and I'll try to reply to all of your lovely comments.

After this, I will be devoting my time to finishing my #SpookySlick Collection, but I will also be participating in the A/B/O Reverse Bang and likely the Murder Husbands Big Bang and the Reel Hannibal. Basically - I'll be around (and you are also participating in any of those events, YAYZ). Farewell for now!

Find me @ Telegram as TheSilverQueen : Pillowfort as TheSilverQueen : Tumblr as thesilverqueenlady : Twitter as silverqueenlady : NewTumbl as thesilverqueen : Dreamwidth as thesilverqueenlady

If you liked this story and have a second to spare, please feel free to like & reblog the Tumblr posts and like & retweet the Twitter thread! Seeing likes on Tumblr and Twitter as well as kudos/comments on AO3 gives me the warm fuzzies :)

Index of All the Ficlets

Chapter Summary

So this is the index of all the ficlets in this 12 Days of Murdermas collection . . . mostly because I can't fit all of this in the AO3 summary, but also because even I am starting to forget which prompt matches which story. Enjoy!

Day 1: Surprise Heat/Rut
Summary: When fireman Will rescues an unconscious Hannibal after a house fire, the last thing he expects is for Hannibal to immediately descend into heat, declare his scent divine, and then demand him as a heat partner.
Dynamics: Alpha!Will & Omega!Hannibal
Tags: Fireman Will, Mating Cycle/In Heat

Day 2: Accidental Bonding
Summary: When Will agrees to fill in last minute for a shoot with Hannibal Lecter, the newest rising omega star in the acting world, he never expects to end up accidentally bonded to the guy.
Dynamics: Alpha!Will & Omega!Hannibal
Tags: Alternate Universe – Actors, Accidental Marriage, Accidental Bonding, Mutual Pining

Day 3: Mpreg
Summary: In a world where the winner of a heat match is the one who proves they are stronger and thus undergoes the transformation into the omega who carries the child, Will and Hannibal enter their first heat after the cliff fall and fight for the honor of carrying their child.
Dynamics: Omega!Will & Alpha!Hannibal
Tags: Mating Cycles/In Heat, Mpreg, Wrestling, Knotting

Day 4: Beta Pairings
Summary: When Prince Will turns eighteen, a banquet is held in honor: officially to celebrate his birthday, unofficially so his regents can have their pick of a suitor who can control Will as thoroughly as his regents have. It's all abruptly derailed when a monster bursts in, declaring that his name is Hannibal and he is owed Will's hand, all due to a promise they made years ago to be wed if both were unmarried when they came of age - a promise, it is foretold, that if broken brings down destiny's wrath upon them all.
Dynamics: Beta!Will & Beta!Hannibal
Tags: Alternate Universe – Fantasy, Marriage, Fate & Destiny, Magic

Day 5: Mistletoe
Summary: Three times did the King warn the Prince not to enter the Tower, and three times did the Prince disobey him. And on the third night, while the King was away, a mighty roar erupted from the Tower, for the Prince had released the Monster imprisoned inside, and by

the time the King returned, the Monster had ridden away upon his nightmare stag, the Prince his hostage.
Dynamics: Omega!Will & Beta!Hannibal
Tags: Alternate Universe – Fairy Tale, Wendigo Hannibal Lecter, Kissing, Magic

Day 6: True Mates
Summary: Hannibal Lecter has his life routine down perfectly: he sees patients as a psychiatrist, he cooks all of his own food, and most importantly, he kills and eats every true mate Mother Nature sees fit to send his way. After all, he knows there's no way anyone could be his equal, even if their scent says they're his true mate. Enter Will Graham.
Dynamics: Omega!Will & Omega!Hannibal
Tags: Alternate Universe – Soulmates, First Kiss, True Mates, Alternate Universe – Reincarnation

Day 7: Role Reversal
Summary: When FBI Agent Hannibal Lecter wakes up after emergency surgery, he meets the doctor who saved his life, an omega named Dr. Will Graham. He expects Dr. Graham to agree to his request for discharge. He does not expect Dr. Graham to get up in his business and smell him.
Dynamics: Omega!Will & Omega!Hannibal
Tags: Alternate Universe – Role Reversal, FBI Agent Hannibal Lecter, Sassy Will Graham, Doctor Will Graham, Will Graham Knows

Day 8: Sex Toys
Summary: Hannibal really wants to bond with Will, but as they are both alphas, there are two problems: alphas instinctively will fight as rivals and alphas aren't built to take knots like omegas are. Will can tell that Hannibal is trying to solve these problems, but he'd appreciate it more if Hannibal would explain what he was doing. Or why he keeps getting large mysterious packages in the mail.
Dynamics: Alpha!Will & Alpha!Hannibal
Tags: Sex Toys, Knotting Dildos

Day 9: Surprise Guests
Summary: Will isn't exactly surprised that he was right about the Chesapeake Ripper being an omega, but he is surprised that Hannibal Lecter has twin omega daughters. He's even more surprised when Jack drops the children off at Will's house because no one else will babysit the Ripper's daughters.
Dynamics: Alpha!Will & Omega!Hannibal
Tags: Children of Characters, Babysitting, Caring Hannibal Lecter

Day 10: Snow
Summary: Will Graham wakes up from a plane crash with a splitting headache and no memories of why he was on said plane. Thankfully, the good Dr. Lecter - the only other survivor - is more than happy to help.
Dynamics: Beta!Will & Omega!Hannibal
Tags: Temporary Amnesia, Cabin Fic, Snowed In, Sharing a Bed

Day 11: Creature Fic
Summary: When does Will know that letting Jack do the wedding toast was a mistake? When Jack starts the speech with: “The first time our Will Graham met the good Dr. Hannibal Lecter, Hannibal turned in a ravenstag.”
Dynamics: Beta!Will & Beta!Hannibal
Tags: True Mates, Animal Transformation, Ravenstag, Marriage

Day 12: New Year
Summary: Hannibal's New Year resolution is to marry Will. Will's New Year resolution is to christen every single surface in their house. They both have a really great New Year.
Dynamics: Omega!Will & Alpha!Hannibal
Tags: New Years, New Year’s Resolution, Marriage, Wedding Rings, Post-Fall

End Notes

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Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!